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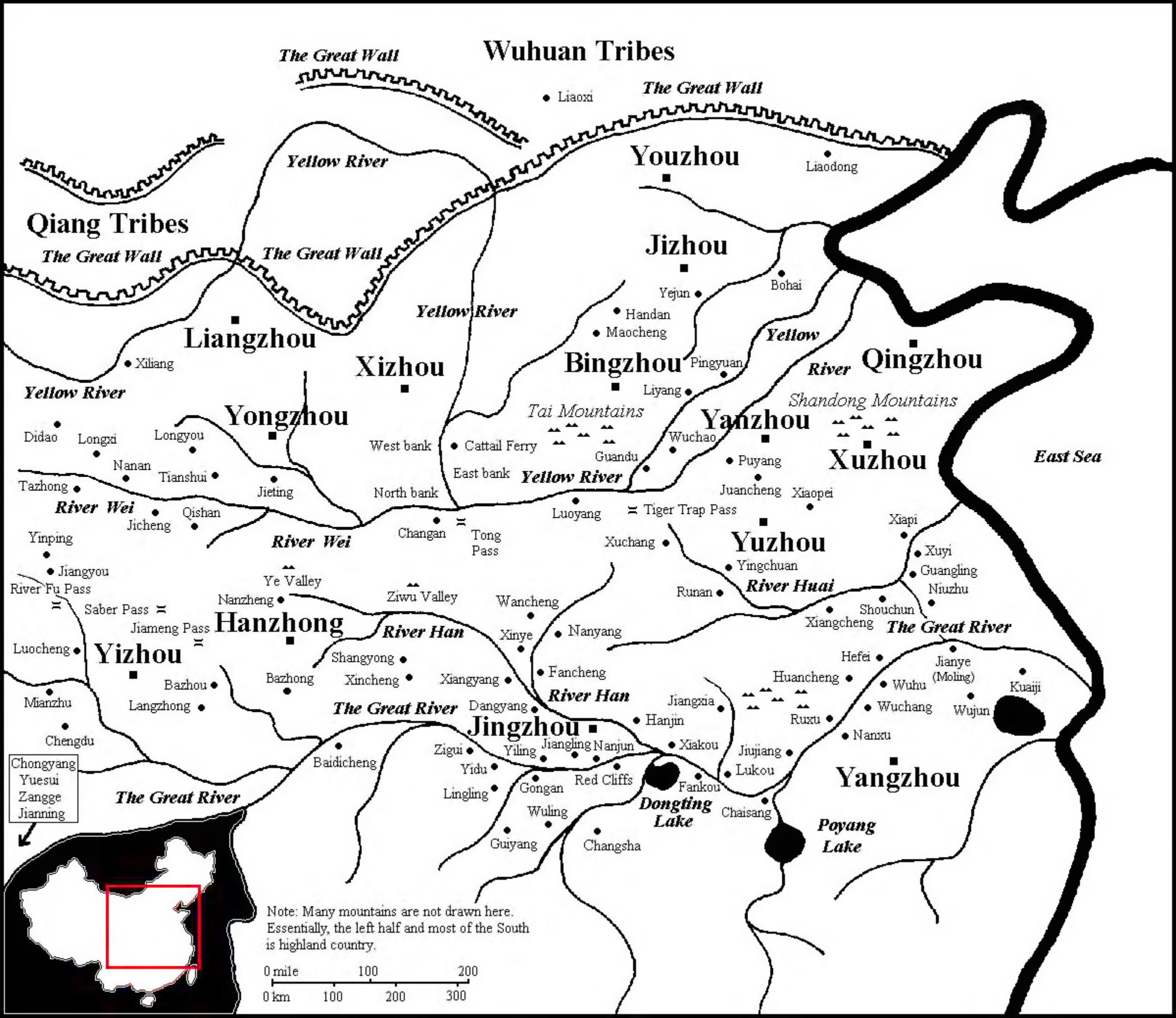
SANGOKUSHI

54

CAPTURE OF CHENCANG

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU


Wuhuan Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Liaoxi
Youzhou
Liaodong
Yellow River
Qiang Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Jizhou
Bohai
Yejun
Handan
Maocheng
Yellow River
Liangzhou
Xizhou
Bingzhou
Pingyuan
Yellow River
Qingzhou
Xiliang
Yellow River
Liyang
Shandong Mountains
Tai Mountains
Yongzhou
Yanzhou
Didao
Longxi
Longyou
West bank
Cattail Ferry
Wuchao
Guandu
Xuzhou
East Sea
Nanan
East bank
Yellow River
Puyang
Tianshui
Tazhong
Jieting
North bank
Juancheng
Xiaopei
River Wei
Qishan
Luoyang
Tiger Trap Pass
Jicheng
Changan
Tong Pass
Xiapi
Yuzhou
Yinping
River Wei
Xuchang
Xuyi
Jiangyou
Ye Valley
Yingchuan
Guangling
River Fu Pass
Ziwu Valley
Runan
River Huai
Niuzhu
Saber Pass
Nanzheng
Wancheng
Shouchun
Jiameng Pass
Hanzhong
River Han
Xinye
Nanyang
Xiangcheng
The Great River
Luocheng
Yizhou
Shangyong
Hefei
Jianye (Moling)
Fancheng
Huancheng
Bazhou
Bazhong
Xincheng
Xiangyang
Wuhu
Kuaiji
River Han
Jiangxia
Mianzhu
Langzhong
The Great River
Dangyang
Wuchang
Wujun
Ruxu
Hanjin
Jingzhou
Chengdu
Nanxu
Zigui
Yiling
Jiangling
Nanjun
Xiakou
Jiujiang
Baidicheng
Yidu
Lukou
Yangzhou
Chongyang
Yuesui
Zangge
Jianning
Red Cliffs
Fankou
Gongan
Lingling
Dongting Lake
Chaisang
Wuling
Poyang Lake
Guiyang
Changsha
The Great River
Note: Many mountains are not drawn here.
Essentially, the left half and most of the South
is highland country.
0 mile 100 200
0 km 100 200 300

MAJOR CHARACTERS OF SANGOKUSHI

CAI MAO:
FORMER GENERAL OF LIU BIAO, WHO BECAME THE SUPREME ADMIRAL OF WEI'S NAVY WHEN JINGZHOU SURRENDERED TO CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 25, HE IS FRAMED BY ZHOU YU'S PLOT AND THUS EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.

CAO CAO MENGDE:
THE AMBITIOUS AND MACHIAVELLIAN HERO OF SANGOKUSHI. RISES TO BECOME KING OF WEI BUT DECLINES TO BECOME EMPEROR HIMSELF. PASSES AWAY FROM ILLNESS IN VOLUME 42.

CAO HONG:
YOUNGER COUSIN OF CAO CAO AND NOW HIS LOYAL GENERAL.

CAO PI:
CAO CAO'S ELDEST SON WHO SUCCEEDS TO KING OF WEI AND DETHRONES LAST HAN EMPEROR TO BECOME THE FIRST WEI EMPEROR. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 49.

CAO RUI:
ELDEST SON OF CAO PI. SUCCEEDS AFTER HIS FATHER TO BECOME THE SECOND WEI EMPEROR.

CAO REN:
COUSIN OF CAO CAO AND NOW HIS LOYAL GENERAL. PORTRAYED AS BRAVE BUT HOT-TEMPERED IN THE STORY.

CHENG GONG:
A CITY GUARD CAPTAIN WHO ARRESTED CAO CAO, ONLY TO FREE AND ESCAPE WITH HIM AFTER SYMPATHIZING WITH HIS STORY. HOWEVER, HE LATER DEFECTS TO LU BU AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR. IN VOLUME 14, HE IS EXECUTED ALONG WITH LU BU.

CHENG YU:
IMPORTANT AND LOYAL STRATEGIST SERVING CAO CAO.

CHEN DENG:
THE SON OF CHEN GUI AND FORMERLY TAO QIAN OF XUZHOU'S SUBORDINATE. HE AND HIS FATHER SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL.

CHEN GUI:
FATHER OF CHEN DENG WHO SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL. DESPITE SECRETLY WORKING TOGETHER WITH LIU BEI AGAINST CAO CAO, CAO CAO SPARES HIS LIFE AND ALLOWS HIM TO CONTINUE LIVING IN XUZHOU.

DIAN WEI:
CAO CAO'S PERSONAL BODYGUARD, RENOWNED FOR HIS STRENGTH. HE IS ALSO KNOWN BY THE NICKNAME, "E LAI," IN REFERENCE TO THE GENERAL OF THE SAME NAME WHO SERVED UNDER KING ZHOU OF SHANG. IN VOLUME 12, HE WAS KILLED DURING ZHANG XIU'S PLOT TO KILL CAO CAO.

DIAO CHAN:
A MAID TO WANG YUN, WHO RAISED HER AS HIS OWN DAUGHTER. SHE AND WANG YUN PLOTTED TO DISTANCE LU BU FROM DONG ZHUO BY HAVING HER SEDUCE BOTH MEN. IN VOLUME 8, SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HER GOAL.

DONG CHENG:
ELDER STATESMAN OF HAN WHO IS EMPEROR XIAN'S CONFIDANT. EMPEROR XIAN SECRETELY ASKS HIM TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO, WHO NOW RULES THE IMPERIAL COURT AS CHANCELLOR. IN VOLUME 17, HE IS EXECUTED AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION PLOT IS FOUND OUT BY CAO CAO.

DONG ZHUO:
GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU WHO LATER SEIZED CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND SEATED HIMSELF AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN, BECOMING AN INFAMOUS TYRANT. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, LU BU.

EMPRESS HE:
ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HER BEAUTY WAS NOTICED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS AND SHE ROSE TO BECOME THE EMPRESS, UTILIZING RUTHLESS MEANS. HOWEVER, SHE AND HER SON WERE REMOVED FROM POWER AND KILLED BY DONG ZHUO WHEN HE CAME TO POWER.

FA ZHENG:
FORMER SUBJECT OF LIU ZHANG, BUT DEFECTED TO LIU BEI DURING HIS CONQUEST OF SHU. HE IS ONE OF LIU BEI'S KEY STRATEGISTS.

GAN NING:
FORMER-PIRATE WHO IS NOW A FIRECE GENERAL OF WU.

GONGSUN ZAN:
GOVERNOR OF BEIPING, WHO WAGES WAR AGAINST YUAN SHAO FOR KILLING HIS YOUNG BROTHER. IN VOLUME 15, YUAN SHAO'S ARMY CONQUERS BEIPING, CAUSING GONGSUN ZAN TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

GUAN PING:
GUAN YU'S ADOPTED SON AS OF VOLUME 19. SERVES ALONGSIDE HIS FATHER UNTIL THEIR DEATH IN VOLUME 42.

GUAN XING:
GUAN YU'S SECOND SON, WHO BECOMES A PROMINENT SHU OFFICER AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH.

GUAN YU YUNCHANG:
SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER TO LIU BEI AND SWORN OLDER BROTHER TO ZHANG FEI. AFTER THE FAILED SIEGE ON FANCHENG, HE IS EVENTUALLY CAUGHT BY WU FORCES AND PROMPTLY EXECUTED IN VOLUME 42.

GUO JIA:
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO CAO CAO. HE DIES FROM ILLNESS DURING CAO CAO'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE YUAN FAMILY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

HE JIN:
ORIGINALLY A SIMPLE BUTCHER, HE BECAME A GENERAL WHEN HIS YOUNGER SISTER ROSE TO BECOME EMPRESS HE. HE IS KILLED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS DURING THEIR POWER STRUGGLE IN VOLUME 3.

HUANG GAI:
LOYAL GENERAL OF WU, WHOSE FAMILY HAS SERVED THE SUN FAMILY FOR THREE GENERATIONS.

HUANG ZHONG:
AN ELDERLY WARRIOR GENERAL RENOWNED ESPECIALLY FOR HIS SKILL WITH THE BOW. FORMERLY SERVED LIU BIAO AND HAN XUAN BUT DEFECTS TO LIU BEI IN VOLUME 28. FALLS IN BATTLE AGAINST WU FORCES IN VOLUME 43.

HUA XIN:
WEI MINISTER WHO RISES TO BECOME CHANCELLOR OF WEI UNDER CAO PI'S REIGN.

JIANG QIN:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH ZHOU TAI, BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR SUN CE'S FATHER, SUN JIAN.

JIANG WEI:
NATIVE OF JICHENG AND FAMED FOR BOTH HIS MENTAL AND MARTIAL PROWESS. ORIGINALLY SERVED WEI, BUT DEFECTED TO SHU IN VOLUME 51 AFTER KONGMING'S PLAN TURNED HIS WEI ALLIES AGAINST HIM.

JIA XU:
FORMER STRATEGIST OF ZHANG XIU, WHO PLOTTED A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON CAO CAO, WHICH LEFT DIAN WEI DEAD. AS OF VOLUME 16, HE HAS DEFECTED TO CAO CAO AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR.

LI DIAN:
SCHOLARLY GENERAL UNDER THE SERVICE OF CAO CAO.

LI RU:
CUNNING ADVISOR TO DONG ZHUO. WITH HIS ADVICE, DONG ZHUO FIRMLY SECURES HIS SEAT AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN. IN VOLUME 8, HE IS KILLED ALONG WITH DONG ZHUO WHEN LU BU BETRAYS THEM.

LIU BIAO:
THE GOVERNOR OF JINGZHOU. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO SICKNESS IN VOLUME 22 AND THE CONSEQUENT SUCCESSION CRISIS ALLOWS CAO CAO TO TAKE OVER JINGZHOU.

LIU BEI XUANDE:
THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF SANGOKUSHI. A VIRTUOUS MAN, WHO CLAIMS DESCENT FROM EMPEROR JING OF HAN. HE HAS SWORN AN OATH OF BROTHERHOOD WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI. HE BECOMES AN EMPEROR AND ESTABLISHES A SUCCESOR-DYNASTY TO HAN IN VOLUME 43.

LIU FENG:
LIU BEI'S ADOPTED SON. ORIGINALLY THE NEPHEW OF LIU MI, HE WAS ADOPTED UPON FIRST SIGHT BY LIU BEI WHO TOOK A LIKING TO HIM IN VOLUME 21. HE IS UNFORTUNATELY EXECUTED BY LIU BEI IN VOLUME 43 AFTER DENYING AID TO GUAN YU.

LIU QI:
ELDEST SON OF LIU BIAO WHO TEMPORARILY LOSES HIS INHERITANCE OF JINGZHOU DUE TO CAI MAO'S PLOT. IN VOLUME 29, HE PASSES AWAY FROM ILLNESS AND THE RIGHTFUL OWNERSHIP OF JINGZHOU CONTINUES TO BE DEBATED BETWEEN SUN QUAN AND LIU BEI.

LIU ZHANG:
INCOMPETENT RULER OF SHU (ALTERNATIVE NAME FOR YIZHOU). HE SEEKS LIU BEI'S HELP TO FEND OFF ZHANG LU, BUT RELATIONS SOON SOUR AND LIU BEI USURPS HIS RULE OVER SHU. AS OF VOLUME 35, HE IS EXILED TO JINGZHOU.

LU BU:
ALTHOUGH REPUTED TO BE THE STRONGEST WARRIOR, HE IS HOT-HEADED AND RARELY HEEDS WISE ADVICE. IN VOLUME 14, HE WAS BETRAYED BY HIS SUBORDINATES, AND EXECUTED BY CAO CAO.

LU MENG:
FIRECE WU GENERAL, WHO AT LAST CONQUERS JINGZHOU FOR SUN QUAN, CAPTURING GUAN YU IN DOING SO. UNFORTUNATELY DIES TO A SUDDEN ILLNESS AFTER GUAN YU'S EXECUTION IN VOLUME 42, CAUSING SOME TO THINK HE WAS CURSED.

LU SU:
IMPORTANT MILITARY GENERAL AND ADVISOR OF WU.

LU XUN:
TALENTED WU OFFICIAL WHO QUICKLY RISES TO FAVOUR AFTER SUCCESSFULLY PLANNING THE CONQUEST OF JINGZHOU.

MA CHAO:
ONE OF THE FIVE TIGER GENERALS OF SHU, WHO ONCE SOUGHT TO AVENGE HIS FATHER'S DEATH AT CAO CAO'S HANDS BEFORE ENTERING LIU BEI'S SERVICE IN VOLUME 35. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 49.

MA DAI:
A NEPHEW OF MA CHAO WHO ENTERS LIU BEI'S SERVICE ALONGSIDE HIS UNCLE.

MA LIANG:
AN ADVISOR TO LIU BEI. HE IS THE FOURTH YOUNGEST OF THE FIVE MA BROTHERS, AND IS NOTED FOR HIS INTELLECT AND WHITE EYEBROWS. HE PASSES AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 46.

MA SU:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF MA LIANG, WHO, UPON REPORTING THE PASSING OF MA LIANG, CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF KONGMING AND ASSISTED THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGNS. HE HAS SINCE BECOME AN IMPORTANT STRATEGIST OF SHU.

MA TENG:
GOVERNOR OF XILIANG AND FATHER OF MA CHAO, WHO SIGNED THE BLOOD-PLEDGE TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO. IN VOLUME 30, HE IS EXECUTED FOR A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT OF CAO CAO.

MENG DA:
FORMER SUBJECT OF LIU ZHANG WHO DEFECTS TO LIU BEI, ALONG WITH HIS GOOD FRIENDS ZHANG SONG AND FA ZHENG. HE LATER DEFECTS TO WEI IN VOLUME 43, AFTER REALIZING HE WOULD BE KILLED IN SHU TO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR GUAN YU'S DEATH.

MENG HUO:
KING OF THE NANMAN TRIBES, WHO UNSUCCESSFULLY SUPPORTED A REVOLT IN SOUTHERN SHU. KONGMING'S SOUTHERN CAMPAIGNS WERE LAUNCHED IN RETALIATION. AFTER BEING CAPTURED AND RELEASED 7 TIMES, HE SURRENDERS AND BECOMES A LOYAL SUBJECT TO SHU.

MI ZHU:
ONE OF LIU BEI'S ADVISORS.

PANG DE:
FIERCE GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED MA TENG AND THEN MA CHAO. IN VOLUME 36, HE DEFECTS TO CAO CAO'S SERVICE DUE TO A TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP WITH ZHANG LU, THE LORD OF HANZHONG. PERISHES IN THE BATTLE OF FANCHENG AGAINST GUAN YU IN VOLUME 41.

PANG TONG SHIYUAN:
NICKNAMED THE YOUNG PHOENIX (FENGCHU), HE IS A MASTERFUL STRATEGIST SAID TO BE ZHUGE LIANG'S EQUAL. AFTER ENTERING LIU BEI'S SERVICE, HE TRAGICALLY MET AN EARLY DEATH IN SHU WHEN AMBUSHED BY ZHANG REN IN VOLUME 34.

SIMA YI ZHONGDA:
IMPORTANT MILITARY STRATEGIST OF WEI SINCE CAO CAO'S REIGN. UPON CAO RUI'S SUCCESSION TO THE WEI THRONE, HE WAS BRIEFLY FRAMED FOR TREASON BY ZHUGE LIANG, BUT WAS RESTORED TO POWER IN LIGHT OF THE GROWING CRISIS OF ZHUGE LIANG'S NORTHERN CAMPAIGN AGAINST WEI.

SHUI JING:
HIS REAL NAME IS SIMA HUI BUT HE IS MORE COMMONLY KNOWN BY HIS TAOIST NAME, SHUI JING (MEANING WATER MIRROR). HE IS THE TEACHER OF ZHUGE LIANG, PANG TONG, AND XU SHU.

SUN CE:
ELDEST SON OF SUN JIAN, WHO TURNS THE SUN FAMILY'S FORTUNE AROUND WITH HIS CONQUEST OF THE SOUTH-LANDS. IN VOLUME 19, A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AND CONFLICT WITH YU JI CAUSES HIS BODY AND MENTAL HEALTH TO WEAKEN. HE SUCCUMBS TO DEATH SHORTLY AFTER.

SUN JIAN:
THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO. HOWEVER, HIS ALLIES LIU BIAO AND YUAN SHAO TO TURN ON HIM WHEN HE TRIES TO KEEP THE IMPERIAL SEAL FOR HIMSELF. IN VOLUME 7, HE IS KILLED IN BATTLE AGAINST YUAN SHAO.

SUN QIAN:
TRUSTED ADVISOR TO LIU BEI. (HIS ROLE IS MUCH SMALLER IN SANGOKUSHI COMPARED TO THE ORIGINAL NOVEL.)

SUN QUAN:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF SUN CE AND THE CURRENT RULER OF WU, THE SOUTHLANDS OF CHINA.

TAISHI CI:
GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED LIU YAO BUT DEFECTED TO SUN CE IN VOLUME 11. DURING THE BATTLE OF HEFEI (VOL. 29), HE FALLS PREY TO ZHANG LIAO'S PLAN AND IS KILLED IN BATTLE.

TAO QIAN:
THE KIND GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU WHO ACCIDENTALLY INVOKES CAO CAO'S WRATH WHEN HIS DISLOYAL SUBORDINATE ZHANG KAI KILLS CAO CAO'S FATHER, CAO SONG. UPON HIS DEATH, HE BEQUEATHS XUZHOU TO LIU BEI.

THE TEN ATTENDANTS:
A CORRUPT GROUP OF 10 EUNUCHS WHO WERE THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THEY WERE KILLED DURING THE POWER STRUGGLE WITH HE JIN IN VOLUME 4.

WANG YUN:
THE MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE 3 HIGHEST RANKING POSTS IN THE IMPERIAL COURT. HE SUCCESSFULLY PLOTS DONG ZHUO'S DOWNFALL USING DIAO CHAN IN VOLUME 8. HOWEVER, HE IS LATER KILLED BY REMNANTS OF DONG ZHUO'S ARMY (UNSHOWN IN MANGA).

WEI YAN:
GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED LIU BIAO AND HAN XUAN BUT HAS DEFECTED TO LIU BEI ALONG WITH HUANG ZHONG IN VOLUME 28.

WEN CHOU:
HE AND YANG LIANG ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 18, HE IS AMBUSHED BY CAO CAO'S ARMY AND KILLED BY GUAN YU.

XIAHOU DUN:
TRUSTED GENERAL OF CAO CAO. HE LOST HIS LEFT EYE DURING A BATTLE AGAINST LU BU'S ARMY IN VOLUME 13.

XU CHU:
TRUSTED BODYGUARD OF CAO CAO. ORIGINALY A PEASANT, HE WAS RECRUITED BY CAO CAO WHO WAS IMPRESSED AFTER SEEING XU CHU'S DUEL WITH DIAN WEI.

XU SHU (SHAN FU):
THE TALENTED STRATEGIST WHO STUDIED UNDER SHUI JING. AFTER A BRIEF STINT OF SERVICE TO LIU BEI, HE IS TRICKED INTO COMING TO XUCHANG AND SERVING CAO CAO (VOLUME 21).

XUN YU:
TALENTED ADVISOR TO CA CAO.

XU HUANG:
CALM AND COLLECTED GENERAL UNDER SERVICE TO CAO CAO. CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE FIVE TOP GENERALS OF WEI BY CHEN SHOU, AUTHOR OF RECORDS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS.

YAN LIANG:
HE AND WEN CHOU ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS. IN VOLUME 17, HE WAS KILLED BY GUAN YU WHILE FIGHTING CAO CAO'S ARMY AT BAIMA.

YAN YAN:
FORMER GENERAL OF LIU ZHANG BUT DEFECTED TO LIU BEI AFTER HIS CAPTURE AT ZHANG FEI'S HANDS IN VOLUME 34. HE IS NOTED FOR HIS ENERGY DESPITE HIS OLD AGE.

YU JIN:
GENERAL SERVING CAO CAO. CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE FIVE TOP GENERALS OF WEI BY CHEN SHOU, AUTHOR OF RECORDS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS.

YUAN SHAO:
OLDER BROTHER OF YUAN SHU AND THE GOVERNOR OF JIZHOU. AFTER MANY YEARS OF WARRING AGAINST CAO CAO FOR CONTROL OF NORTHERN CHINA, HE AND HIS FAMILY ARE DEFEATED.

YUAN SHU:
YOUNGER BROTHER OF YUAN SHAO AND THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG. AFTER RECEIVING THE IMPERIAL SEAL FROM SUN CE, HE DECLARES HIMSELF AS THE EMPEROR OF ZHONG DYNASTY. IN VOLUME 15, HE DIES OF THIRST AFTER BEING ON THE RUN FROM LIU BEI AND CAO CAO'S ARMIES.

ZHANG BAO:
ELDEST SON OF ZHANG FEI, WHO RISES TO PROMINENCE AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER.

ZHANG FEI YIDE:
A FIRECE, SHORT-TEMPERED WARRIOR WHO IS THE SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER OF LIU BEI AND GUAN YU. HIS TEMPER EVENTUALLY GETS THE BETTER OF HIM, WHEN HE IS BETRAYED AND KILLED BY HIS SUBORDINATES IN VOLUME 43.

ZHANG LIAO:
ONE OF CAO CAO'S TOP GENERALS. HE WAS FORMERLY LU BU'S SUBORDINATE BUT DEFECTED TO CAO CAO AFTER THE FORMER'S EXECUTION.

ZHANG LU:
THE LEADER OF THE CELESTIAL MASTERS TAOIST MOVEMENT, AND THE RULER OF HANZHONG. IN VOLUME 36, CAO CAO CONQUERS HANZHONG BUT SPARES ZHANG LU.

ZHANG REN:
ONE OF SHU'S MOST CAPABLE GENERALS WHO PLANNED THE AMBUSH THAT KILLED PANG TONG. HE REFUSED TO SERVE LIU BEI UNLIKE MANY OF HIS COMRADES AND WAS THUS EXECUTED WHEN FINALLY CAPTURED AT THE HANDS OF ZHUGE LIANG (VOLUME 35).

ZHANG SONG:
AN ADVISOR TO LIU ZHANG WHO, UPON FAILING TO MAKE AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN CAO CAO AND LIU ZHANG, SOUGHT LIU BEI'S SUPPORT AND SWITCHED HIS ALLEGIANCE. IN VOLUME 34, HE IS EXECUTED WHEN HIS BROTHER REPORTS HIS BETRAYAL TO LIU ZHANG.

ZHANG XIU:
LORD OF WANCHENG WHO ATTEMPTED TO KILL CAO CAO DURING THE BATTLE OF WANCHENG IN VOLUME 12. AFTER YEARS OF CONFLICT AGAINST CAO CAO, HE FINALLY DECIDES TO DEFECT TO CAO CAO IN VOLUME 16.

ZHAO YUN ZILONG:
A FORMER SUBJECT OF YUAN SHAO BUT LATER DEFECTED TO SERVE GONGSUN ZAN. AFTER GONGSUN ZAN'S DEATH, HE BECOMES ONE OF LIU BEI'S MOST TRUSTED GENERALS.

ZHOU TAI:
GENERAL OF WU. FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH JIANG QIN BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE OUT OF ADMIRATION FOR HIS FATHER, SUN JIAN.

ZHANG ZHAO:
ELDER STATESMAN AND SUN QUAN'S TRUSTED ADVISOR. HE ORIGINALLY ENTERED SUN CE'S SERVICE ALONG WITH ZHANG HONG, WITH WHOM HE WAS REFERRED TO AS THE "TWO ZHANGS."

ZHOU CANG:
FORMERLY A YELLOW TURBAN, HE MEETS GUAN YU IN VOLUME 18 AND BECOMES HIS SUBORDINATE. COMMITS SUICIDE AFTER LEARNING GUAN YU WAS EXECUTED IN VOLUME 42.

ZHOU YU GONGJIN:
SWORN BROTHER OF SUN CE, AND ONE OF WU'S TOP MINDS, SERVING AS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF DURING THE BATTLE OF THE RED CLIFFS. HE RECEIVES A CRITICAL ARROW-WOUND DURING HIS NANJUN CAMPAIGN (VOL. 27) WHICH HE NEVER FULLY RECOVERS FROM, LEADING TO HIS TRAGIC EARLY DEATH IN VOLUME 30.

ZHUGE LIANG KONGMING:
MASTERFUL STRATEGIST AND FORMER STUDENT OF SHUI JING. IN VOLUME 21, HE YIELDS TO LIU BEI'S PERSISTENCE AND DECIDES TO BECOME HIS SUBJECT.

SANGOKUSHI (ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志

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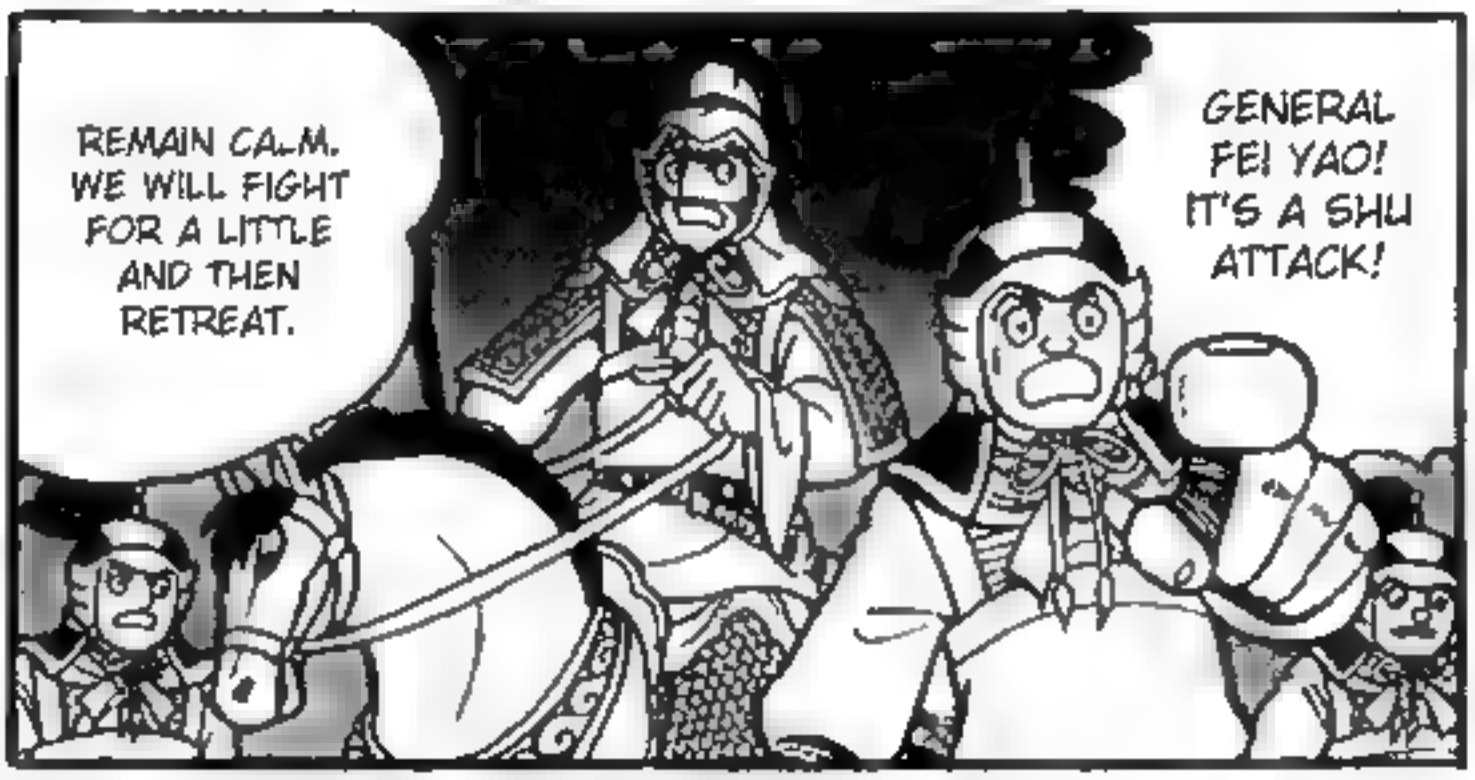
（月刊『コミックトム』掲載）

FIRE AND ROCK

HM!?

WHA?


REMAIN CALM. WE WILL FIGHT FOR A LITTLE AND THEN RETREAT.
GENERAL FEI YAO! IT'S A SHU ATTACK!

ENEMIES!

YES, OUR SIDE HAS MADE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS WITH ONE OF THE R OFFICERS, JIANG WEI.

RETREAT? DID WE HEAR YOU CORRECTLY, SIR?

UNDERSTOOD, SIR.

WE WILL LURE THE ENEMIES AWAY SO JIANG WEI WILL HAVE THE TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO BURN THEIR SUPPLIES AT THEIR REAR. FIRE SMOKES WILL BE HIS SIGNAL FOR US TO RESUME ATTACK SO THAT WE MAY PRESS THE ENEMIES FROM BOTH THE FRONT AND REAR!

NOW ATTACK!

ירח

RETREAT!
RETREAT!

GOOD,
THAT'LL DO.

馬泥
DON'T LET THEM ESCAPE! GIVE CHASE!

WHAT'S TAKING HIM SO LONG...!?

LET'S WITHDRAW JUST 10 MORE LI!

NOT YET, SIR.
ARE THERE STILL NO FIRE SMOKES?

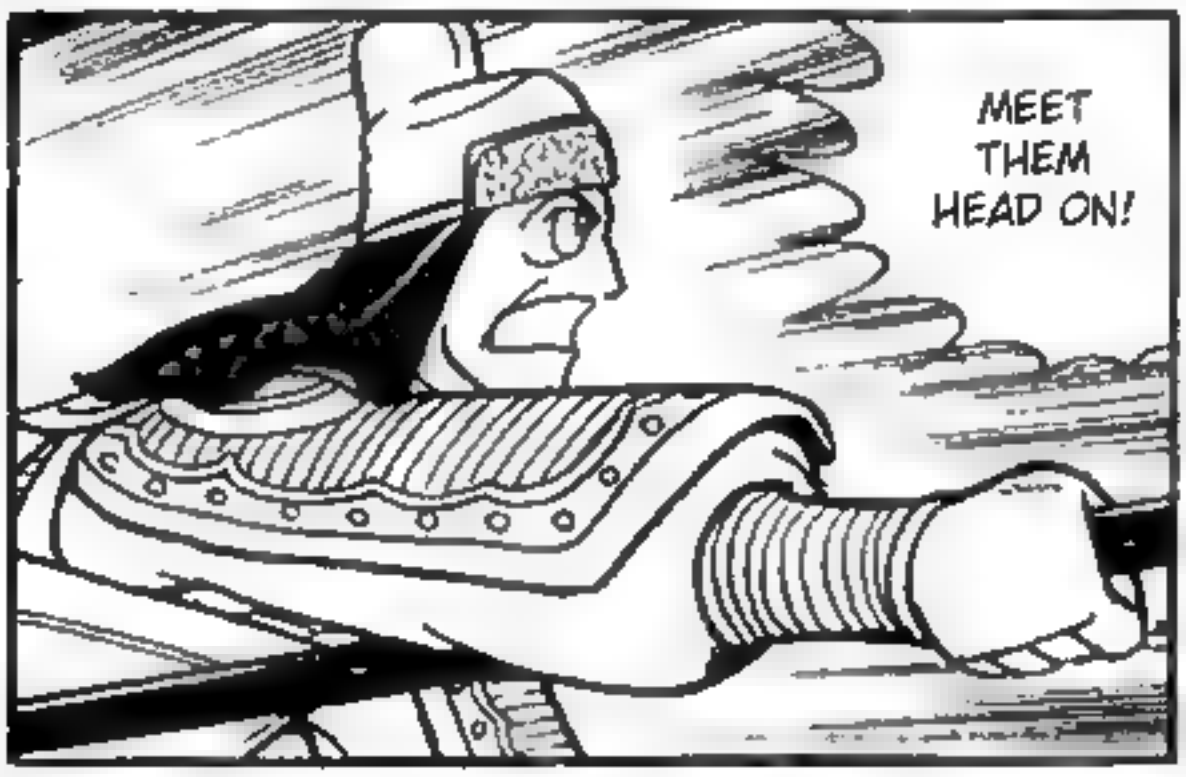
WHAT!?

LOOK, SIR!

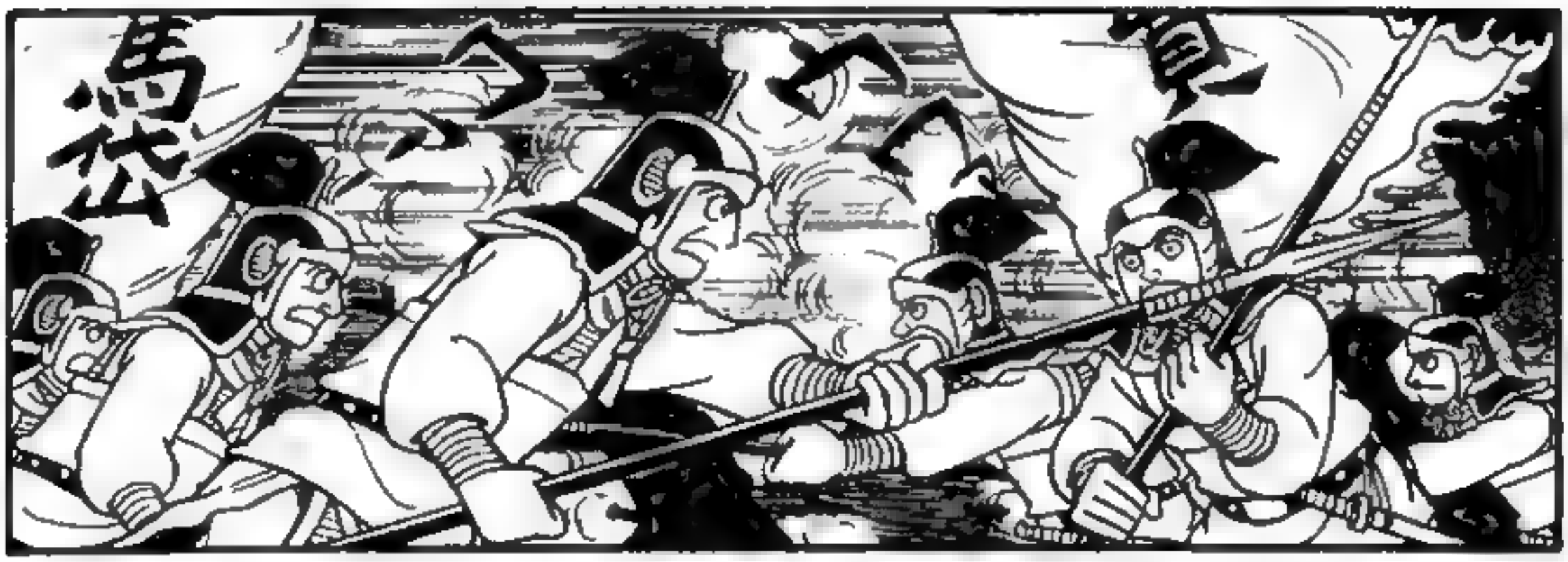
HM?

HALT, MEN! IT'S TIME TO COUNTER-ATTACK!

HE FINALLY DID IT!


MEET
THEM
HEAD ON!

THE ENEMIES
HAVE TURNED
AROUND!


馬岱

GENERAL MA DAI! ONE OF OUR OFFICERS APPEARS TO HAVE TURNED AGAINST US ALL THE WAY AT THE BACK!

DAMN THESE UNRELENTING WEI TROOPS!

WE'LL BE SUR-ROUNDED IF WE STAY HERE!
I BELIEVE SO TOO.
THAT MUST EXPLAIN THE FIRE SMOKES RISING FROM OUR REAR!

ALL TROOPS RETREAT!

NOW'S OUR CHANCE! LET'S PRESS ON THE ATTACK AND CAPTURE ZHUGE LIANG!

LOOK! THE ENEMIES ARE WITHDRAWING IN PANIC!

AHH!

D-DON'T TELL ME...

GENERAL, THE PATH HERE HAS BEEN BLOCKED!

RETREAT AGAIN?

CURSES, IT'S A TRAP! RETREAT! RETREAT!

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?

AHH!

AHHH!

AGHH!

GENERAL! THERE'S AN OPEN PATH THERE!

KEEP RUNNING!

THERE IS!?

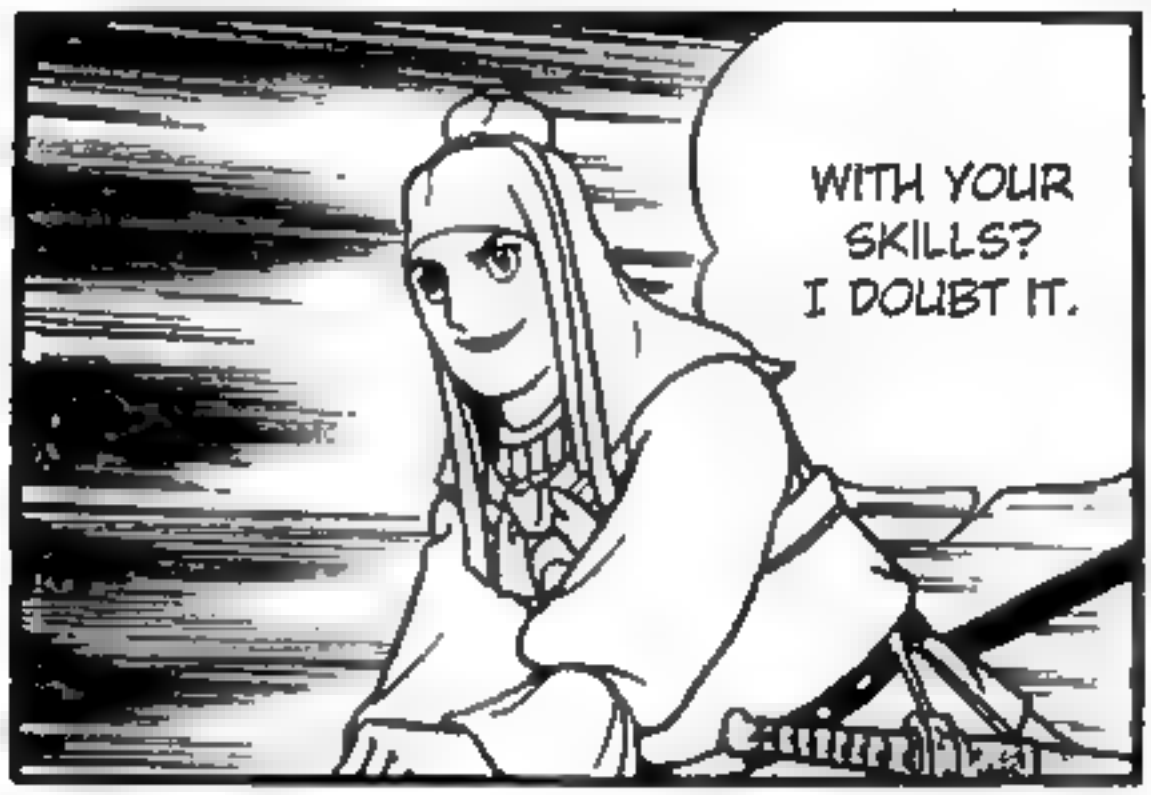
THIS WAY, MEN!

HM?

J-JIANG WEI!?

ALAS, THE TRAP I SET FOR A CRANE HAS CAUGHT A CROW INSTEAD.

HERE I WAS, ANTICIPATING MY CHANCE TO KILL CAO ZHEN AND WHO DO I SEE? FEI YAO.


WITH YOUR SKILLS? I DOUBT IT.

HMPH! I'LL BE THE ONE TAKING YOUR HEAD!

KNOW YOUR PLACE, TREACHEROUS INGRATE!

AHH!

TAKE THIS!

AS IF! I'LL HAVE MY REVENGE IN DUE TIME, YOU'LL SEE!

NOW SURRENDER!

GO BACK TO THE PATH WE CAME THROUGH!

HUFF
HUFF

PANT
PANT

AHHH!

WHA!?

THIS PATH'S BEEN BLOCKED OFF TOO!

WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER!

YOU'VE BEEN TRAPPED! LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS AND SURRENDER!

THE REST OF YOU WILL RETURN FIRE TO THE ENEMIES ABOVE!
SEND A UNIT TO START CLEARING THE ROCKS!

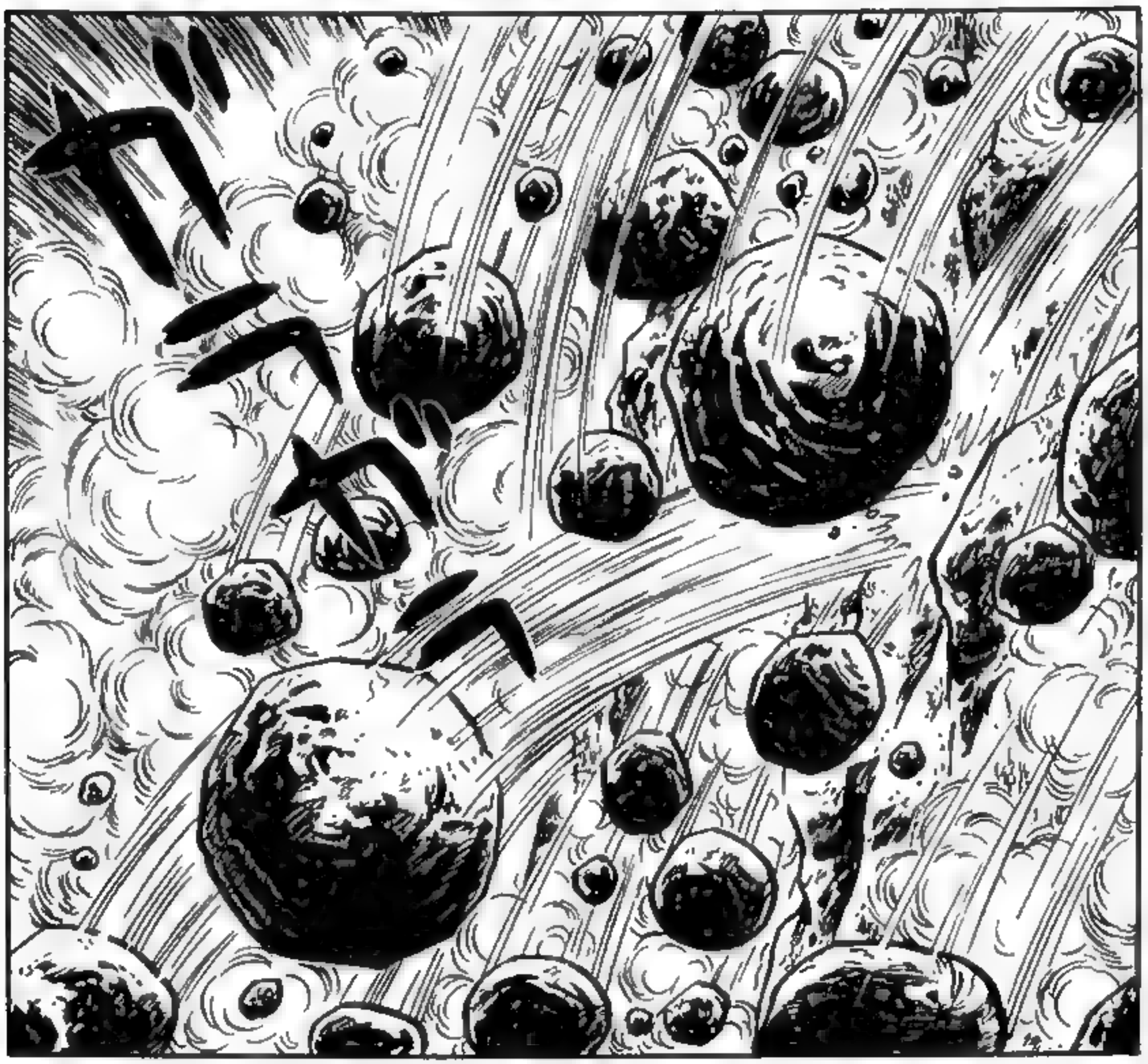
NOW!

SO BE IT THEN.

PUSH!

AGHH!

NGHH...



AGHH!

SO THIS IS
MY END...

GENERAL FEI YAO!?

GENERAL!

HEAR ME, TROOPS OF WEI! YOU HAVE FOUGHT BRAVELY TO THE VERY END. NO ONE COULD POSSIBLY SPEAK ILL OF YOU EVEN IF YOU WERE TO SURRENDER NOW, SO LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS AND WE WILL LOWER ROPES FOR YOU!

HOWEVER, THERE WAS LESS
THAN HALF THE ORIGINAL
NUMBER OF TROOPS STILL
ALIVE TO CLIMB TO SAFETY
MORE THAN 30,000 WET
TROOPS HAD PERISHED
TO THE ATTACK BY
FIRE AND ROCK

YES, IT'S A PITY SUCH A GRAND PLAN HAD A MEAGER RESULT.

FORGIVE ME, SIR, FOR MY AMBITIOUS PLAN TO CATCH CAO ZHEN RESULTED ONLY IN THE DEATH OF FEI YAO. DESPITE THE GREAT NUMBERS WE KILLED, I FAILED TO ACHIEVE OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE.

吕

YES, I WILL KEEP YOUR ADVICE CLOSE AT HEART.

GRAND PLANS HAVE THEIR USES, BUT ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND THAT IT IS USUALLY BETTER TO EXECUTE MODEST AND SIMPLE PLANS THAT HAVE A HIGHER CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING.

CRITICAL WEAK POINT

NEWS OF THE WEI VANGUARD'S CRUSHING DEFEAT QUICKLY REACHED LUOYANG.
THAT'S NOT ALL. ANY REMAINING SURVIVORS ALL SURRENDERED TO SHU.
CLOSE TO 30,000 DIED FROM WHAT I HEARD.

CAO ZHEN HAS STILL YET TO SCORE A SINGLE VICTORY AGAINST ZHUGE LIANG. CHANG'AN WILL FALL IF HE REMAINS IN CHARGE!

INDEED. ZHUGE LIANG HIMSELF IS MORE THREATENING THAN THE WHOLE OF SHU.

SWATTING AWAY A 50,000-STRONG ARMY LIKE A MERE FLY... ZHUGE LIANG IS SCARIER THE MORE YOU DEAL WITH HIM.

SIMA YI'S THE ONLY ONE WHO STANDS A CHANCE AGAINST KONGMING.

KONGMING IS JUST ON A WHOLE OTHER LEVEL THAN THE LIKES OF CAO ZHEN.

YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY WORRIES FAR TOO MUCH.

I HEAR MANY MINISTERS CRITCIZING CAO ZHEN FOR HIS CONTINUED FAILURES, BUT I DO NOT WISH TO RECALL HIM IF POSSIBLE AND HARM NOT ONLY HIS PRESTIGE BUT THAT OF THE WHOLE CAO FAMILY. THAT BEING SAID, I AM TERRIBLY WORRIED WHETHER HE CAN REALLY DEFEND THE WESTERN FRONT...

THE ENEMY'S CRITICAL WEAK POINT IS THEIR FOOD SUPPLY.

OH? IS THERE A WAY?

ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS SIMPLY INDUCE THE SHU FORCE TO RETREAT.

THAT IS WHY HE SOUGHT TO HOLD JIETING LAST TIME, AND MARCHED TO CHENCANG THIS TIME.

AN ARMY MARCHES ON ITS STOMACH. ZHUGE LIANG WILL CHOOSE ONLY THE EASIEST PATHS TO SUPPLY HIS TROOPS FOR THE MARCH TOWARDS CHANG'AN.

I SEE...

THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW FORT AT CHENCANG AND THE APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL HAO ZHAO TO ITS DEFENSE WAS ALL FOR THE PURPOSE OF HINDERING SHU FROM EASILY SUPPLYING THEIR TROOPS ALL THE WAY TO CHANG'AN. THIS ALSO EXPLAINS WHY ZHUGE LIANG, HAVING FAILED TO CAPTURE CHENCANG, HAS RELUCTANTLY HEADED FOR QISHAN HILLS ONCE MORE.

AHH, OF COURSE...

HOWEVER, THE HILLS AND STILL SNOWY PATHS TO QISHAN WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE ENEMIES TO PROVISION ALL THEIR TROOPS. I ESTIMATE THEY ONLY HAVE ENOUGH FOOD TO HOLD OUT FOR ONE MONTH.

AND THAT IS PRECISELY WHEN WE MUST STRIKE. A RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF A HUNGRY ARMY ON THE RETREAT WILL BE DEVASTATING.

IF OUR TROOPS DO NOT RESPOND TO THE ENEMY'S BAITS AND SIMPLY STICK TO DEFENDING THEIR POSITIONS, THE SHU FORCE WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO WITHDRAW LEST THEY STARVE JUST AS THE WINTER SNOW BEGINS TO MELT.

THUS, ZHUGE LIANG'S IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE IS TO ACHIEVE A QUICK VICTORY WHILE HIS SUPPLIES LAST. ON THE OTHER HAND, OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO SIMPLY DRAW OUT THIS WAR LONGER THAN A MONTH.

THAT IS BECAUSE I AM STILL UNSURE ABOUT WU'S FUTURE ACTIONS, YOUR MAJESTY.

SIMA YI, IF YOU CAN ASSESS THE SITUATION SO CLEARLY WHILE FAR FROM THE BATTLEFRONT, WHY DID YOU NOT VOLUNTEER TO GO WITH CAO ZHEN?

WU IS NOT AS AGGRESSIVE AS SHU. THEY WILL KEEP OBSERVING THE SITUTATION AND MAKE A MOVE ONLY WHEN THEY SEE AN OPENING. THAT IS WHY WE MUST BE VIGILANT TOWARDS OUR SOUTH.

...

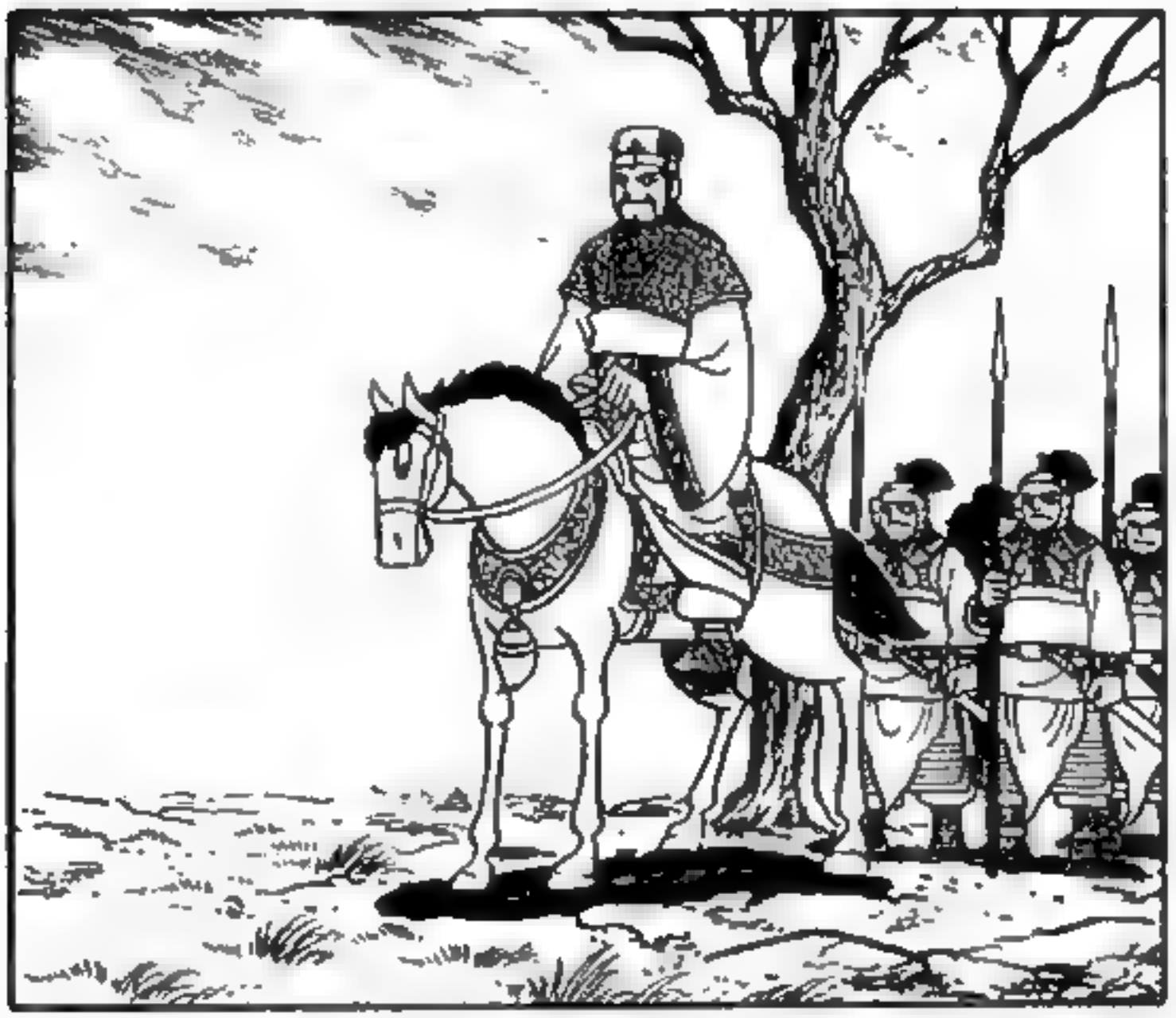
HM? YOU THINK WU WILL ATTACK!?

YES, THAT WOULD BE BEST, YOUR MAJESTY.

THANK YOU FOR EXPLAINING THE SITUATION SO CLEARLY. I WILL TELL CAO ZHEN WHAT YOU TOLD ME.

YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

CALL THE MASTER OF CEREMONY, HAN JI.



JUST SEEING OFF THE MASTER OF CEREMONY, OF COURSE.

MAY I ASK WHAT YOU ARE DOING HERE, SIR?

IF MY PROPOSED PLAN SUCCEEDS, I WISH FOR CAO ZHEN TO RECEIVE ALL THE CREDIT.

AND WHAT MIGHT THAT BE?

THAT, AND I WANTED TO PASS ON ONE OTHER MESSAGE..

THUS, WHEN DELIVERING THE MESSAGE, PLEASE TELL CAO ZHEN THAT THIS PLAN WAS NOT FROM ME, BUT GIVEN BY THE EMPEROR HIMSELF. ALSO, BE SURE TO TELL HIM THAT WHEN PURSUING THE RETREATING SHU FORCES, HE MUST NOT SEND AN IMPATIENT MAN, FOR HE WOULD BE EASY PREY FOR ZHUGE LIANG'S TRAPS.

THANK YOU, HAN JI.

UNDERSTOOD. I WILL DO AS YOU REQUESTED, SIR.

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THANK YOU FOR COMING ALL THE WAY OUT HERE.

GREETINGS, COMMANDER. I AM THE MASTER OF CEREMONY, HAN JI, AND I BRING AN IMPERIAL ORDER.

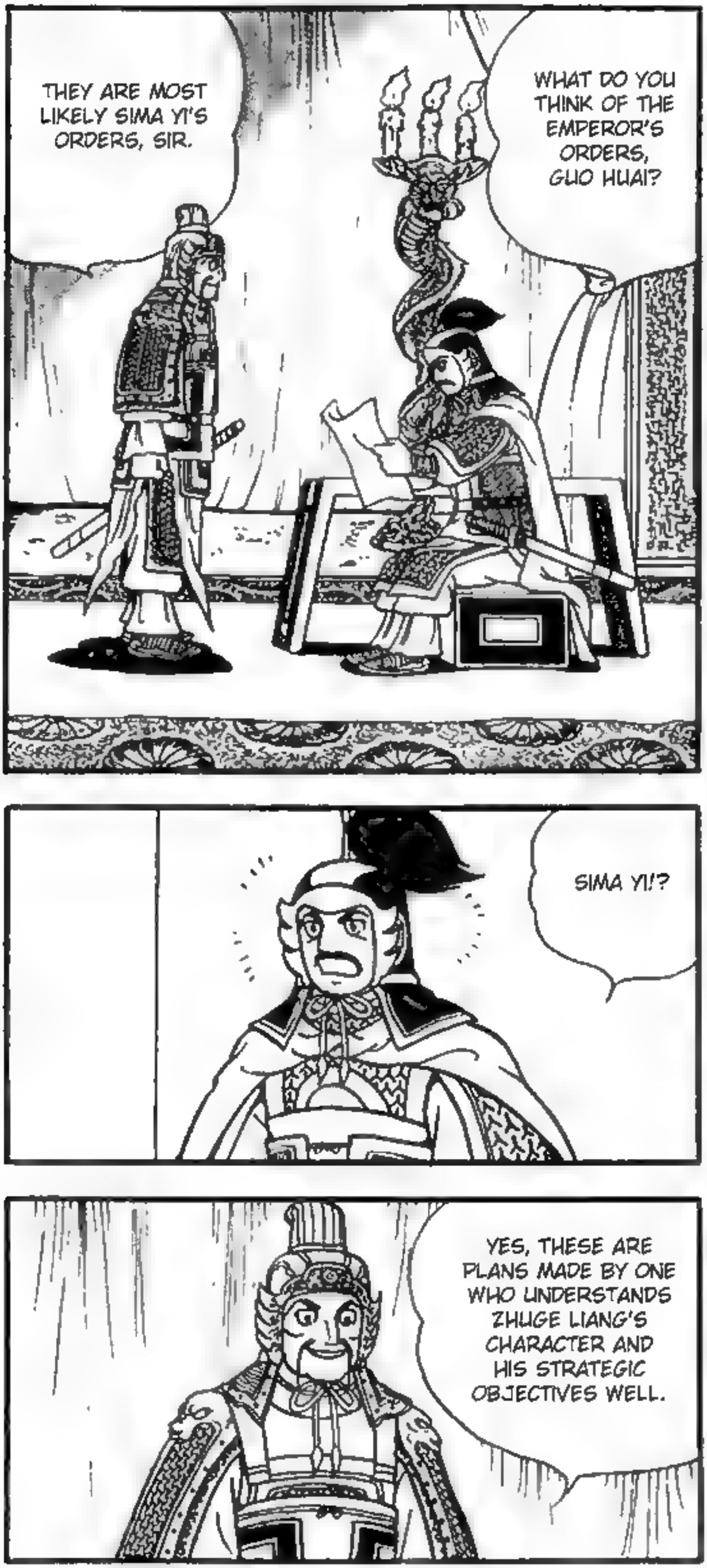
UNDER-STOOD.

THE EMPEROR ADVISES COMMANDER CAO ZHEN TO IGNORE THE ENEMY'S ENTICEMENTS AND FOCUS ONLY ON DEFENDING. THE EXACT DETAILS OF THE ORDER ARE WRITTEN ON THIS LETTER.

YES, I WILL KEEP THE ADVICE CLOSE AT HEART.

AH, AND ONE MORE THING. YOU MUST NOT SEND AN IMPATIENT OFFICER TO CHASE THE ENEMIES IF THEY RETREAT, LEST HE FALLS TO ZHUGE LIANG'S TRAP.

I MUST RETURN TO THE CAPITAL NOW. I BID YOU SUCCESS, COMMANDER.


THEY ARE MOST LIKELY SIMA YI'S ORDERS, SIR.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE EMPEROR'S ORDERS, GUO HUAI?
SIMA YI!?
YES, THESE ARE PLANS MADE BY ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS ZHUGE LIANG'S CHARACTER AND HIS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES WELL.

IS IT NOT CLEAR THAT SIMA YI, WHO HAS PROVEN TO UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY'S GREATEST WEAKNESS IS THEIR FOOD SUPPLY, HAS DEVISED THIS PLAN AS WELL? HE IS TRULY A MASTER STRATEGIST.

THIS TIME, HE ADVISED THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW FORT AT CHENCANG TO ONCE AGAIN HINDER SHU'S SUPPLY ROUTES FOR THE NEXT TIME THEY INVADE.

LAST TIME, HE OVERTURNED THE ENTIRE COURSE OF WAR BY CAPTURING JIETING AND CUTTING OFF THE ENEMY'S SUPPLY ROUTES.

HMM... THAT WOULD MEAN THEY ARE SECURING SUPPLIES FROM SOME-WHERE.

BUT WHAT IF THE ENEMIES REFUSE TO RETREAT?

HM...

HMM...

WE SHOULD SEND WANG SHUANG TO PATROL ALL THE HILL PATHS TO ENSURE THE ENEMIES AREN'T TRANSPORTING GRAIN ALONG THEM.

NO, IT IS INDEED AN EXCELLENT PLAN...

IS SOMETHING TO YOUR DISAPPROVAL, SIR?

RIGHT...

DO NOT LOSE HEART, SIR. EXECUTING A PLAN SUCCESSFULLY IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS DEVISING IT.

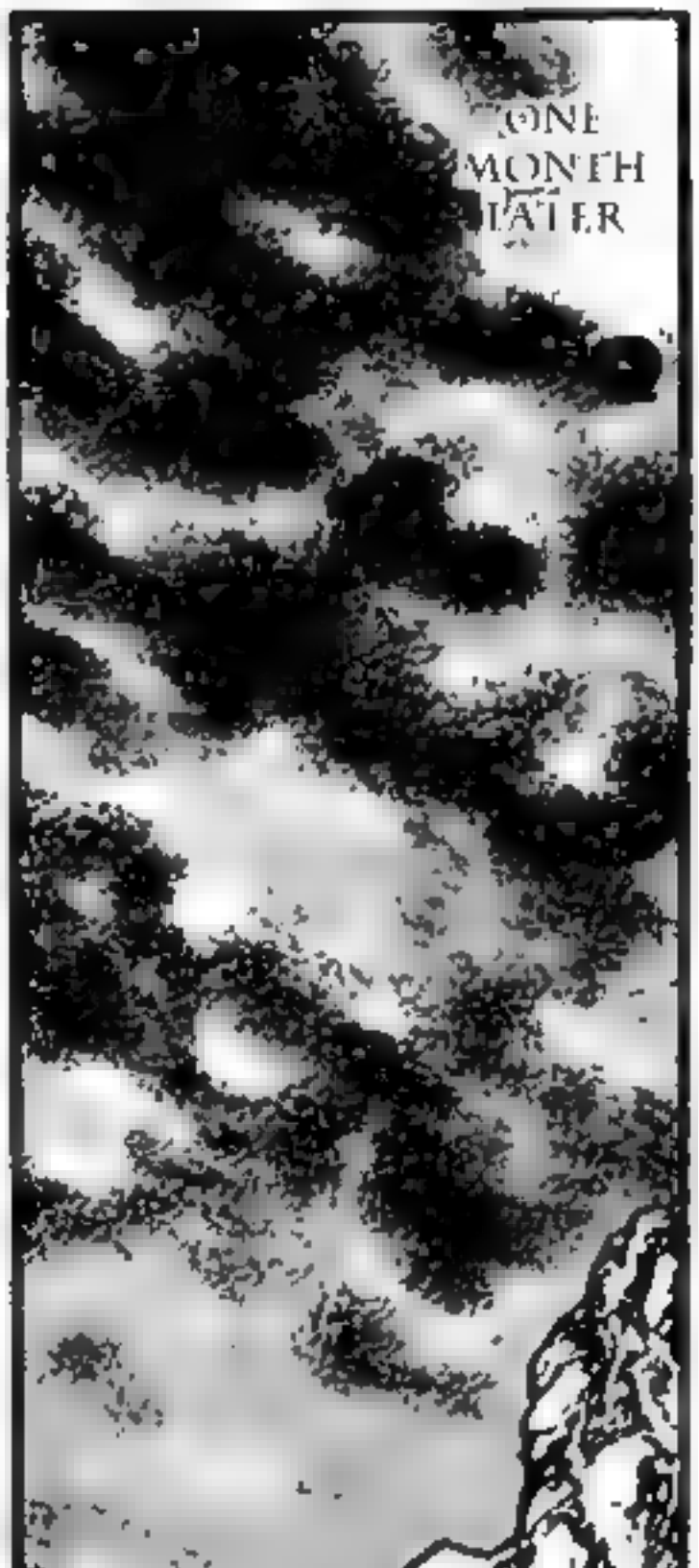
I AM MERELY FRUSTRATED THAT A MAN SO FAR FROM THE BATTLEFRONT CAN SEE THE WAR MORE CLEARLY THAN I CAN...

GIVE THE ORDER TO WANG SHUANG.

YES, SIR.

AS FOR YOU, STRENGTHEN THE DEFENSES OF THE GU GORGE AND JIETING.

WANG SHUANG
HAD SUCCESS
FULLY PATROLLED
THE HILL PATHS
TO QISHAN.


ONE
MONTH
LATER

AND GUO HUAI
ALSO SECURED
JIETING AND GU
GORGE WITH NO
DIFFICULTY

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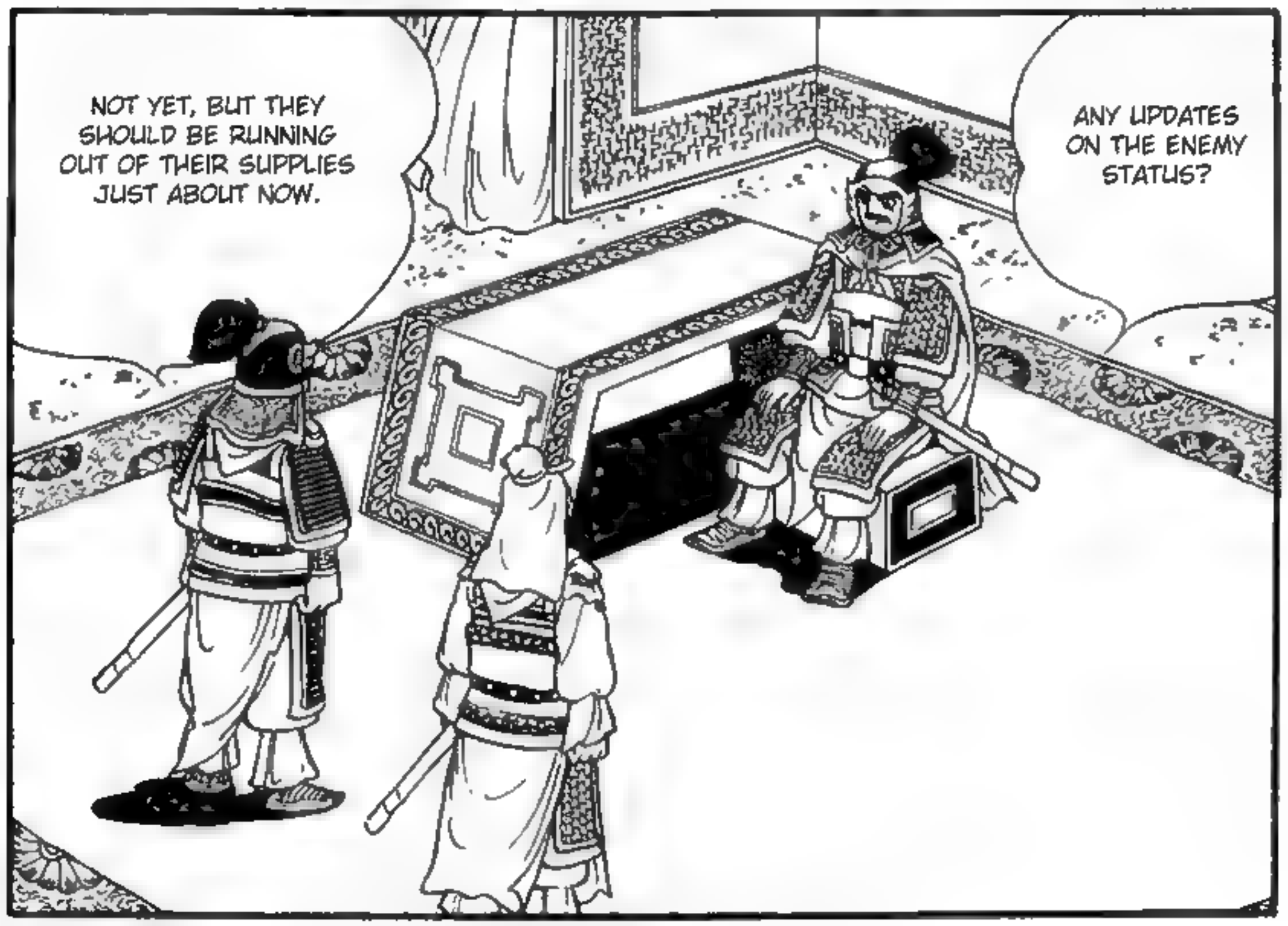

NOT YET, BUT THEY SHOULD BE RUNNING OUT OF THEIR SUPPLIES JUST ABOUT NOW.
ANY UPDATES ON THE ENEMY STATUS?

BEFORE THAT, I HAVE ONE IDEA TO PROPOSE.

GOOD, THEN THEY SHOULD BEGIN RETREATING ANY DAY NOW.

ALLOW ME TO TRANSPORT WAGONS FILLED WITH FLAMMA-BLES BUT DISGUISED AS GRAIN WAGONS ON THE PATH TO QISHAN HILLS.

WHAT IS IT, SUN LI?

THE HUNGRY SHU ARMY WILL FIND THEM IRRESIST-ABLE AND SURELY COME TO TAKE THEM.

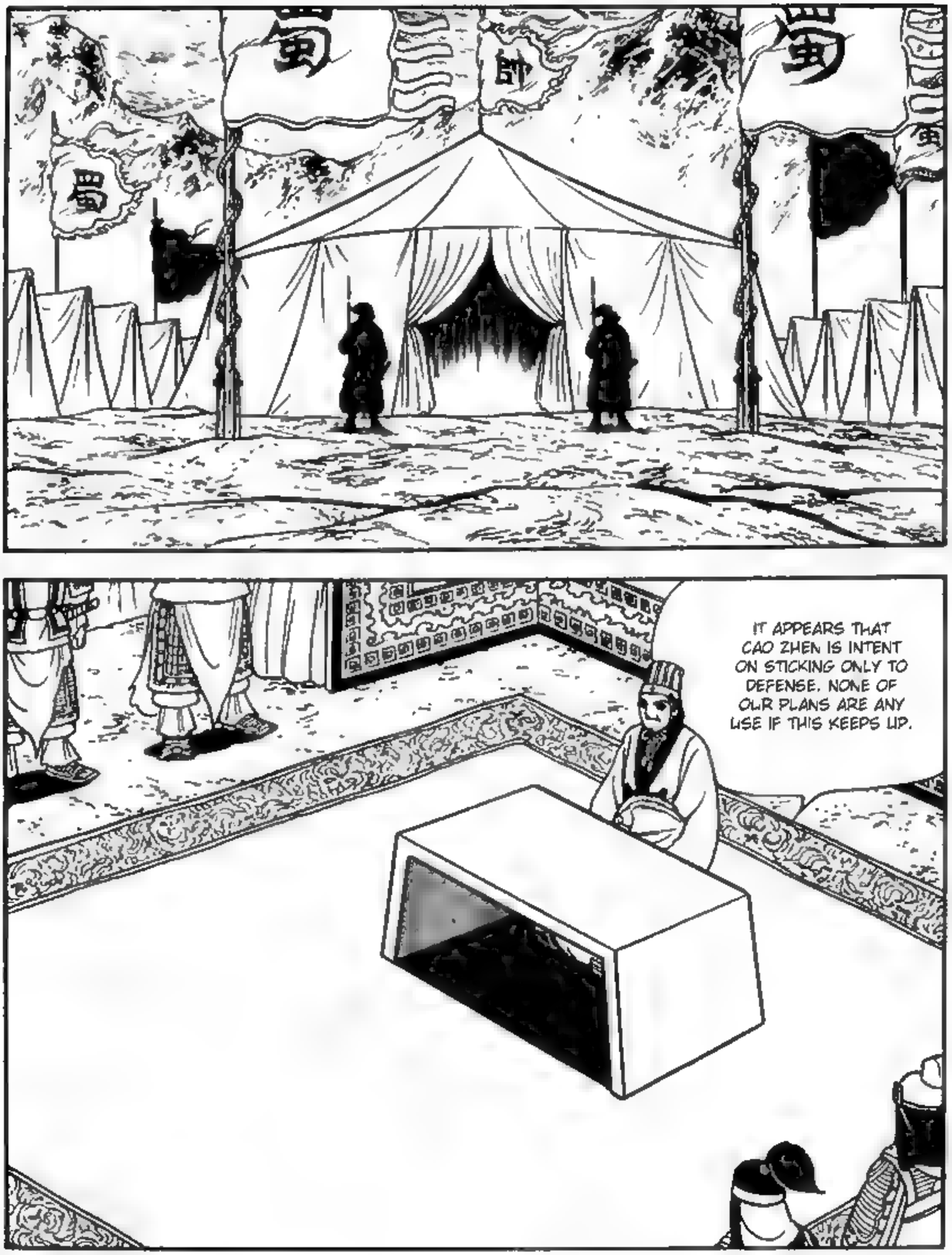
FAKE GRAIN WAGONS CARRYING FLAMMABLES?

AHH, A CUNNING PLAN!

ONCE THEY STEAL THE WAGONS, WE WILL AMBUSH THEM AND LIGHT THEM ON FIRE TO INFLICT DEVASTATING LOSSES.

I'VE STILL YET TO WIN AGAINST ZHUGE LIANG BUT IF THIS PLAN GOES WELL, I CAN FINALLY HOLD MY HEAD UP HIGH WITHOUT BEING INDEBTED TO SIMA YI FOR ONCE...
YES, COMMANDER.
LET'S PREPARE TO CARRY OUT THE PLAN AT ONCE. START BY LEAKING NEWS TO THE ENEMY CAMPS ABOUT DELIVERY OF GRAIN TO QISHAN FROM THE WEI FORCE AT LONGXI.

USEFUL BAIT


IT APPEARS THAT CAO ZHEN IS INTENT ON STICKING ONLY TO DEFENSE. NONE OF OUR PLANS ARE ANY USE IF THIS KEEPS UP.

DOES ANYONE HAVE A GOOD PLAN TO COUNTER THIS?

IT SEEMS EVIDENT THAT THE ENEMIES ARE WAITING FOR OUR SUPPLIES TO RUN OUT. IF WE FAIL TO DO ANYTHING, WE WILL END UP EXACTLY WHERE THE ENEMIES WANT US.

A COSTLY ATTACK ON THEIR DEFENSIVE POSITIONS SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY WAY...

IF WE CAN'T ENTICE THE ENEMIES TO BATTLE, THEN THERE'S LITTLE WE CAN DO...

I BRING AN URGENT REPORT!

WHAT IS IT?

THOUSANDS OF GRAIN CARTS!?

A WEI ARMY IN LONGXI IS SENDING THOUSANDS OF CARTS FILLED WITH GRAIN TO THE WEI TROOPS HERE AT QISHAN HILLS!

I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT!

A GENERAL NAMED SUN LI.

AND WHO IS ASSIGNED TO DEFEND THIS GRAIN CONVOY?

FIRST TIME HEARING HIM MYSELF.

HM...

DOES ANYONE HERE KNOW WHO THIS SUN LI IS?

YES, SIR.

BRING OVER ONE THE WEI SOLDIERS WHO RECENTLY SURREN-DERED.

YES, WE CAN RELIEVE OUR FOOD SHORTAGE WORRIES!

GENERAL OF THE RIGHT, IF WE CAN JUST STEAL THEIR GRAIN, WE CAN KEEP HOLDING OUT HERE.

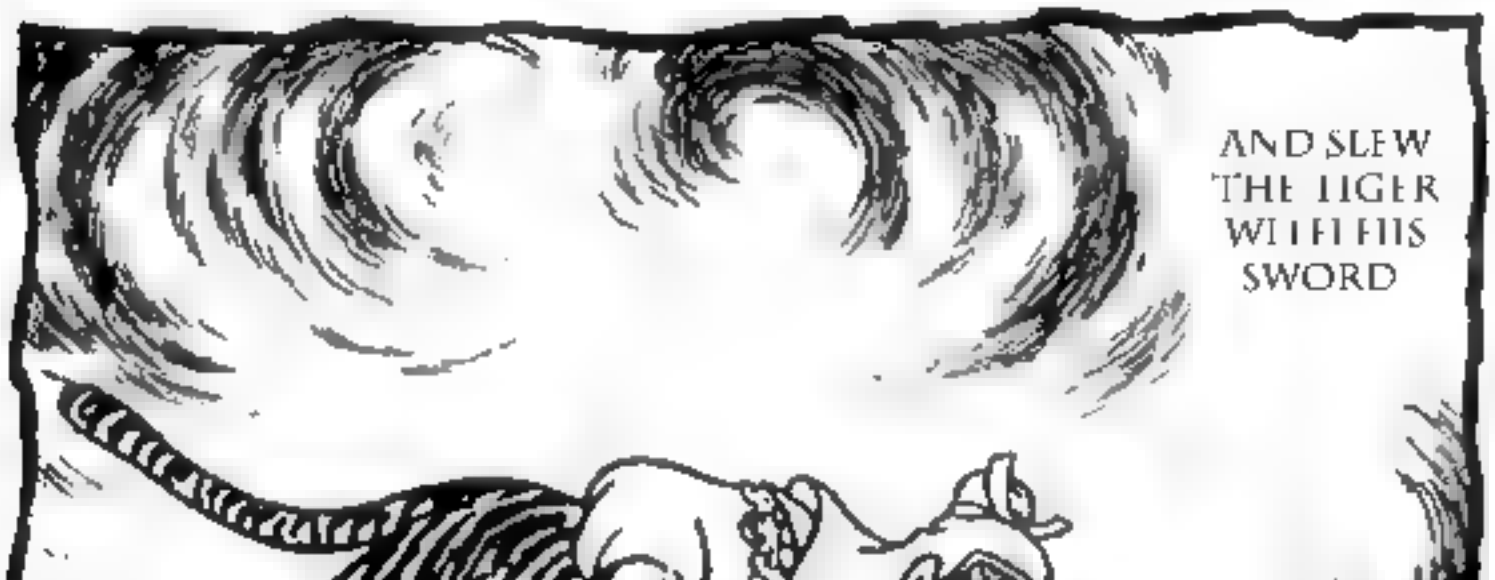
YES, DO YOU PERHAPS KNOW A WEI OFFICER BY THE NAME OF SUN LI?

I AM A FORMER WEI SOLDIER. DID SIR ASK FOR ME?

SUN LI? AH YES, HE'S A FAMOUS WARRIOR.

ONE FAMOUS INCIDENT IS WHEN HE ACCOMPANIED THE WEI EMPEROR ON A HUNT AT DASHI HILLS

SUDDENLY A TIGER LEAPT OUT AT THE WEI EMPEROR.


AND SLEW THE TIGER WITH HIS SWORD

WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION, SUN LI DIS-MOUNTED,

HAHA...

AN IMPRESSIVE FIGURE, I SEE.

FOR THIS, THE EMPEROR HONOURED HIM AS A SENIOR COMMANDER. HE IS DEEPLY TRUSTED BY CAO ZHEN.

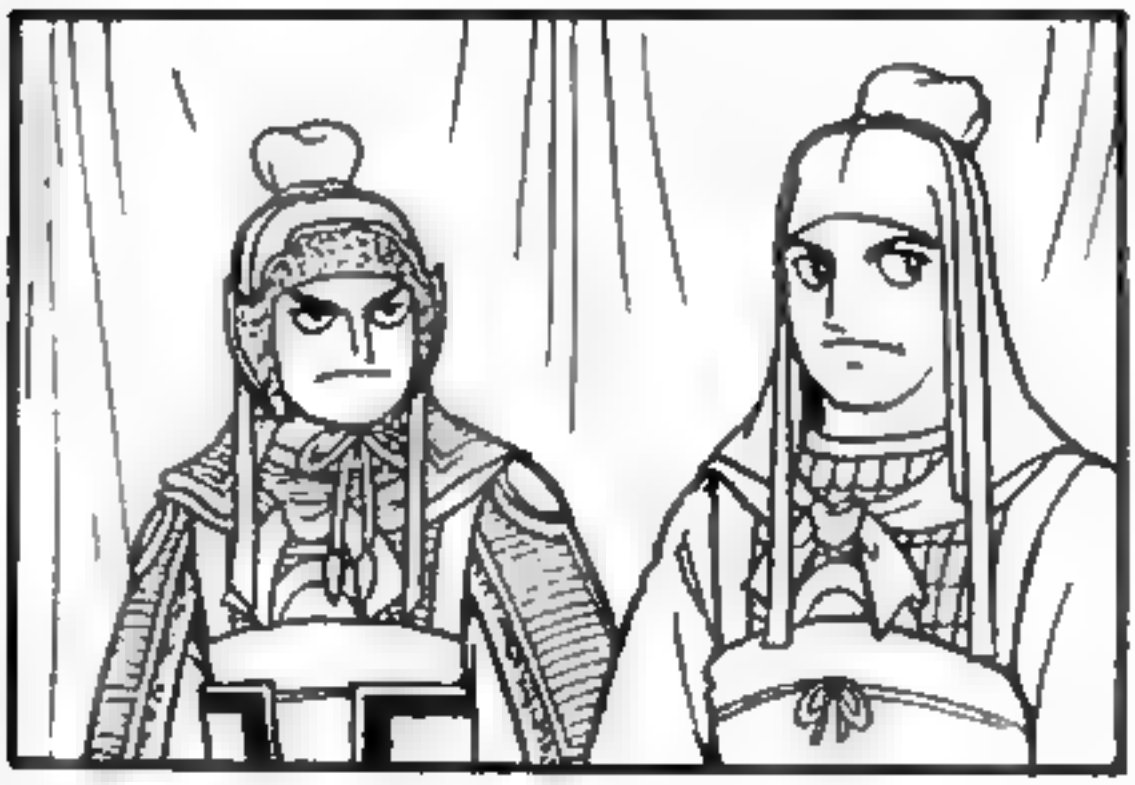
YES, SIR.

THANK YOU FOR THE INFORMATION. YOU MAY EXCUSE YOURSELF NOW.

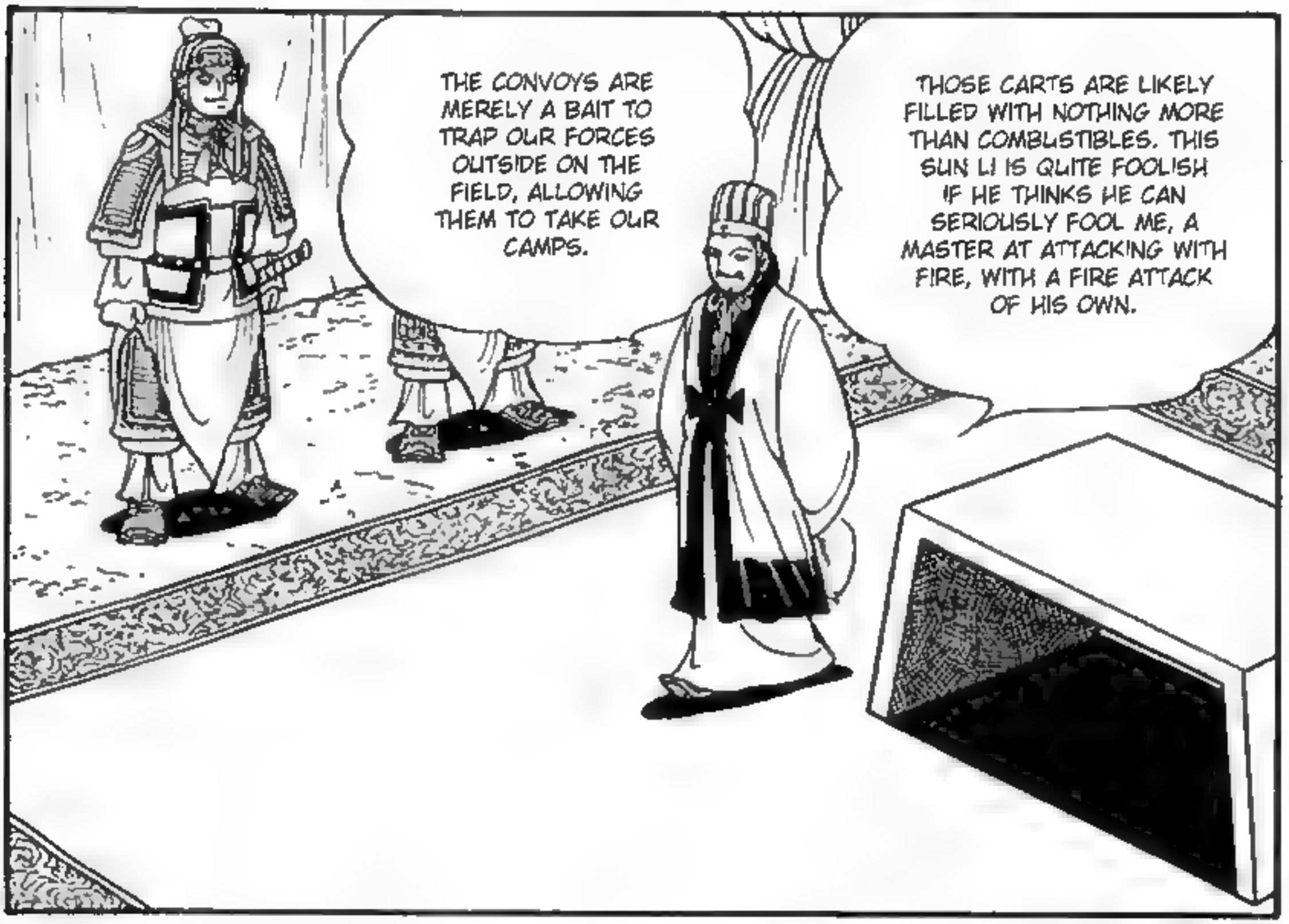
A TRAP!?

WHAT?

THIS IS A TRAP.



A SENIOR COMMANDER APPOINTED TO HEAD A MERE CONVOY IS ALREADY SUSPICIOUS.


THE CONVOYS ARE MERELY A BAIT TO TRAP OUR FORCES OUTSIDE ON THE FIELD, ALLOWING THEM TO TAKE OUR CAMPS.
THOSE CARTS ARE LIKELY FILLED WITH NOTHING MORE THAN COMBUSTIBLES. THIS SUN LI IS QUITE FOOLISH IF HE THINKS HE CAN SERIOUSLY FOOL ME, A MASTER AT ATTACKING WITH FIRE, WITH A FIRE ATTACK OF HIS OWN.

MA DAI.

BUT THERE'S NO RULE AGAINST MAKING GOOD USE OF THE ENEMY'S BAIT...

TAKE 3000 TROOPS AND LIGHT THE CARTS ON FIRE FROM UPWIND. STAY AWAY FROM THE ENEMY CAMPS DURING ALL OF THIS.

YES?

YES?

MA ZHONG, ZHANG NI.

YES, SIR.

UNDER-STOOD.

YES.

ONCE THE ENEMIES SEE THE CARTS ARE ON FIRE, THEY WILL THINK WE HAVE FALLEN FOR THEIR TRAP AND SOON COME TO SURROUND OUR CAMPS. YOU TWO ARE TO WAIT SOME DISTANCE OUTSIDE OUR CAMPS. THIS WAY, IT WILL BE THE ENEMIES WHO WILL BE SURROUNDED, BY OUR TROOPS STILL INSIDE THE CAMP AND YOUR FORCES OUTSIDE.

YES?

YES?

GUAN XING, ZHANG BAO.

YES, SIR.

YOU TWO ARE TO HIDE OUTSIDE THE ENEMY CAMPS. WHEN THE ENEMIES SEE THE FIRE, THEY WILL RUSH OUTSIDE, GIVING YOU THE CHANCE TO TAKE THEM.

YES?

YES?

WU YI, WU BAN.

YES, SIR.

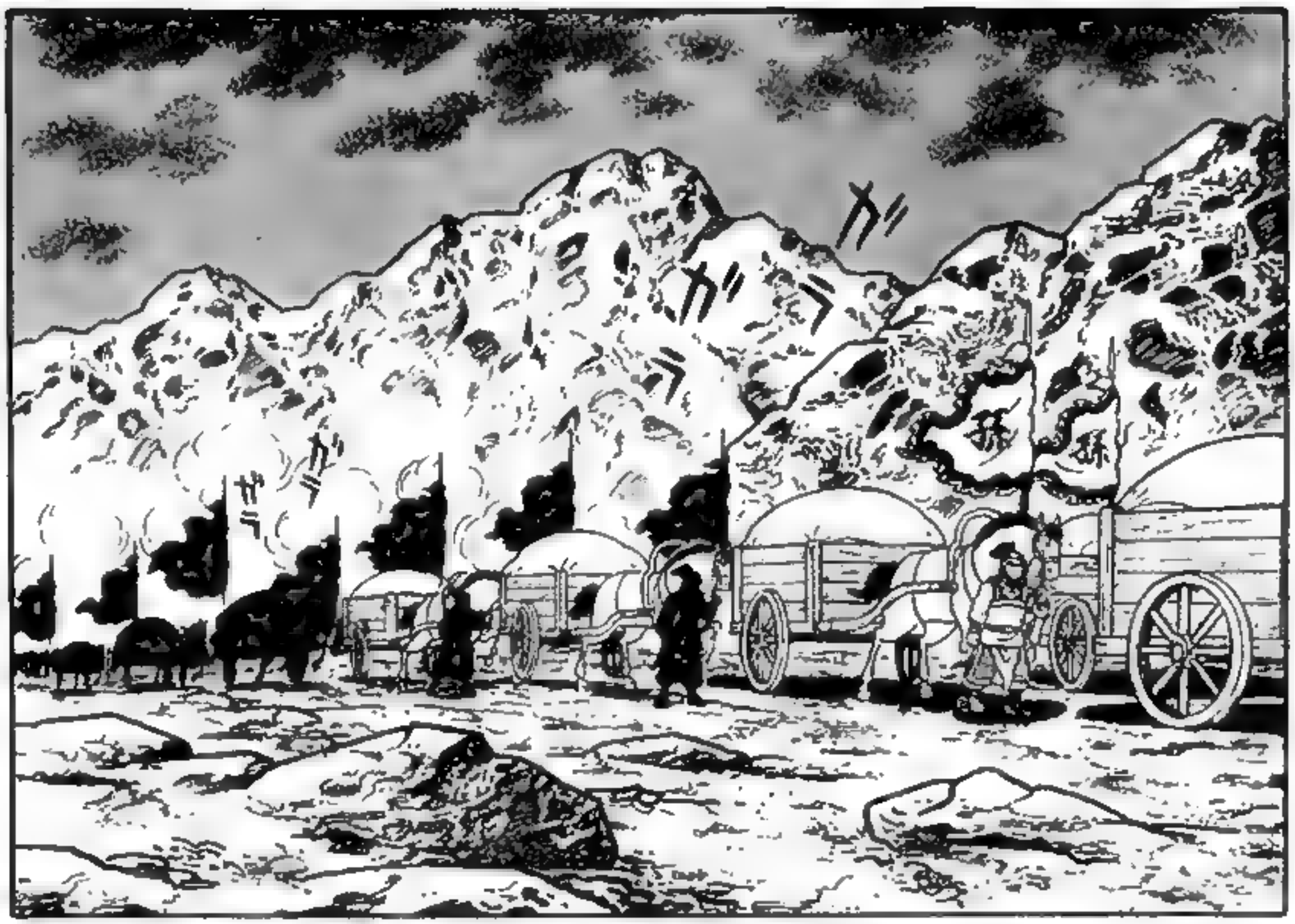
YOU TWO ARE TO ALSO HIDE OUTSIDE OUR CAMPS TO BLOCK OFF ANY POSSIBLE RETREAT FOR THE INCOMING ENEMIES.

YES, SIR.

MAKE SURE NOT TO RUSH ANY OF YOUR DUTIES. ONLY THEN WILL A GREAT VICTORY BE OURS.

UNDER-STOOD.

WE WILL NOT FAIL.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LINE UP THE CARTS OVER THERE HORIZONTALLY THIS WAY!
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GOOD. THIS WAY, THE FIRE WILL BESET THE ENEMIES ON ALL SIDES AS SOON AS THEY COME TO SEAL THE GRAIN.

THE ENEMIES HAVE BEGUN TO MOVE OUT OF THEIR CAMPS!

SIR!

SO THEY TOOK THE BAIT?

MA DAI, MA ZHONG, ZHANG YI, AND MANY OTHER GENERALS WERE ALL SPOTTED HEADING OUTSIDE. THEY MUST BE HEADING THIS WAY TO ATTACK THE GRAIN CONVOY.

YES, SIR.

REPORT BACK TO COMMANDER CAO ZHEN THAT THE ENEMIES HAVE TAKEN THE BAIT!

SOLDIERS! THE ENEMIES WILL BE HERE SHORTLY! WE WILL HIDE AT THE BASE OF THE WESTERN HILLS CLOSE BY AND SPRING OUR AMBUSH WHEN THEY ARRIVE!

REMEMBER TO LIGHT THE CARTS ON FIRE WHEN THE ENEMIES COME!
NOW LET'S MOVE!

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YES, GENERAL SUN LI TOLD ME TO REPORT THAT THEY HAVE TAKEN THE BAIT AND OUR FORCES HERE AT THE CAMP SHOULD ACT AS PLANNED.

SHU TROOPS WERE SEEN HEADING OUT OF THEIR CAMPS!?

YES, SIR.

CALL GENERALS ZHANG HU AND YUE CHEN.

VERY WELL.

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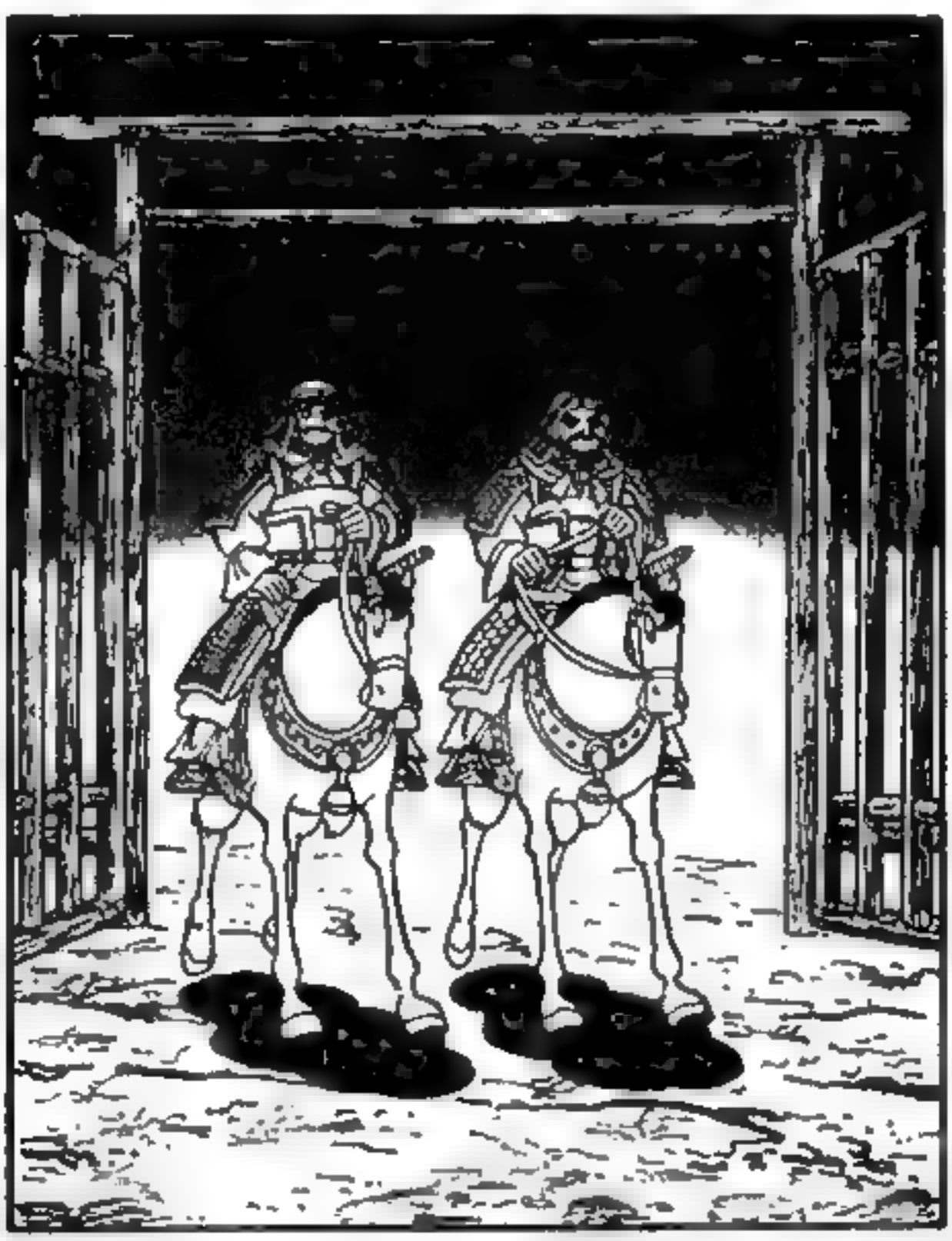
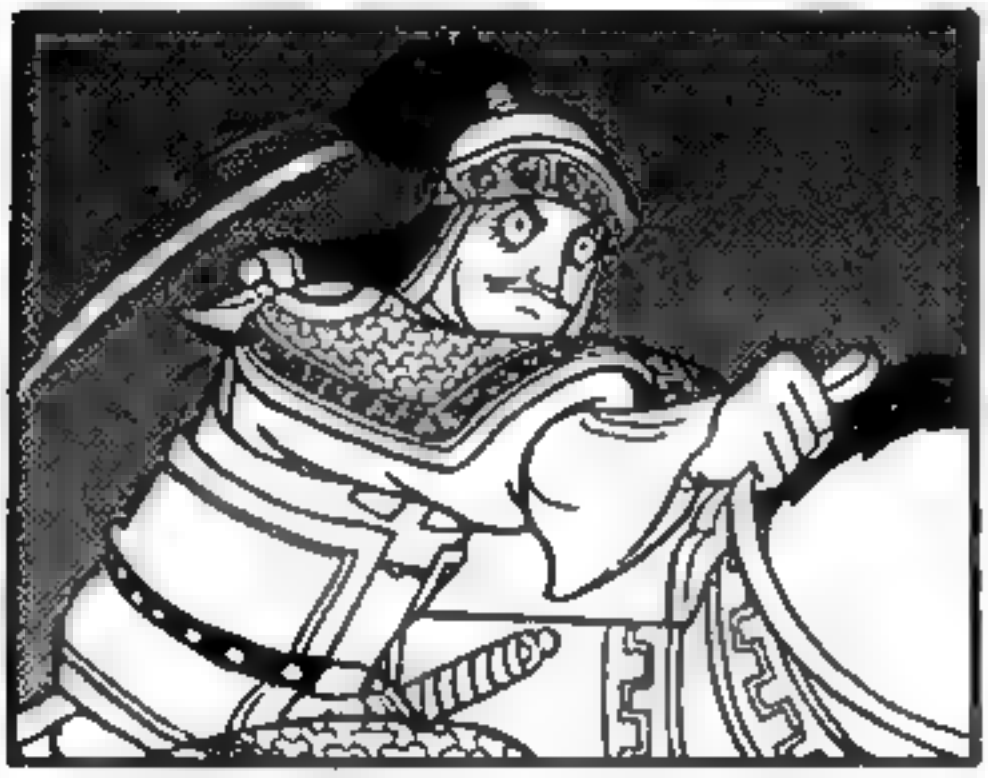
BOTH THE WEI AND SHU CAMPS WERE NOW BUSTLING WITH ACTIVITY





YES, THE ENEMIES HAVE TAKEN THE BAIT.

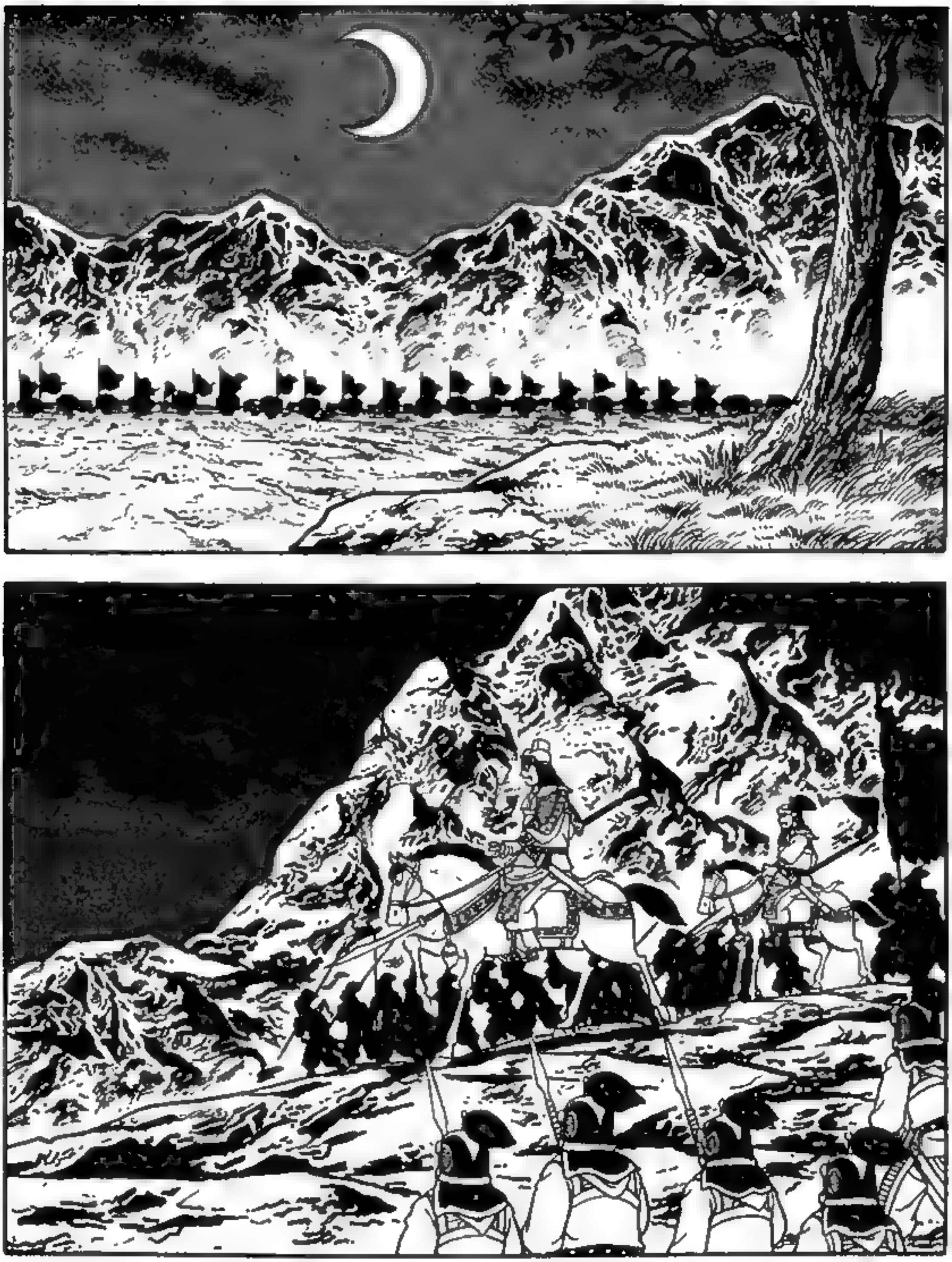
DID SIR CALL FOR US?

WHEN YOU SEE FIRE FROM WEST OF QISHAN HILLS, THAT WILL MEAN THE ENEMIES ARE ENSNARED.

YES, SIR.

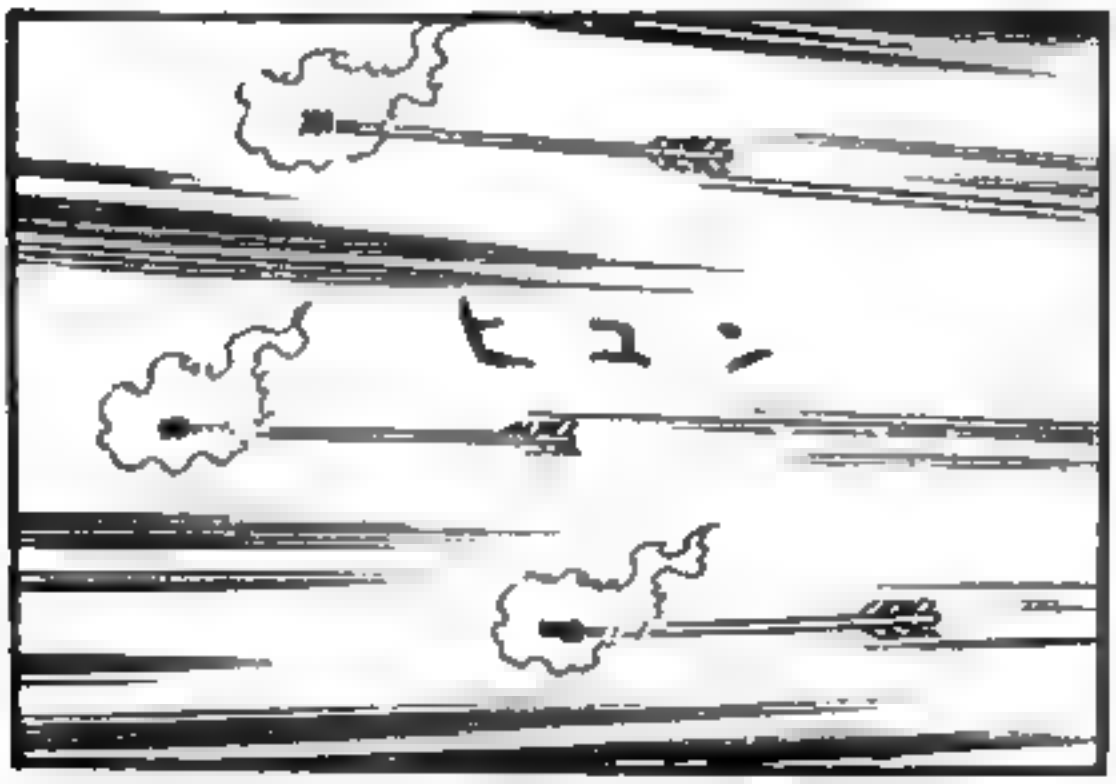
THAT WILL BE YOUR CHANCE TO CAPTURE THE ENEMY'S MOSTLY EMPTY CAMPS.

SEA OF FIRE



YES, S'R.

LIGHT THE CARTS FROM UPWIND AS PLANNED.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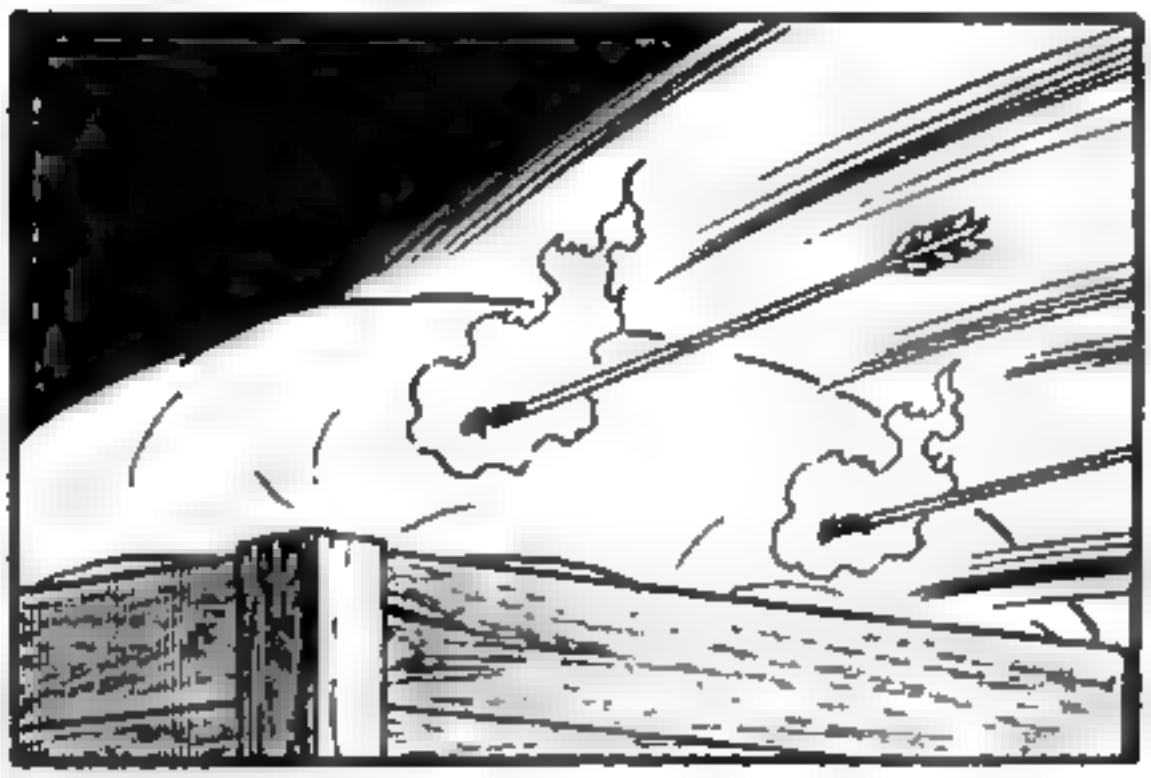


GENERAL SUN LI! THE CARTS ARE ALREADY ON FIRE!

HM!?

WHAT!? HOW COULD THAT BE!?

AHH!

FOLLOW ME, MEN!

SOMETHING'S GONE TERRIBLY WRONG...

W-WHAT'S GOING ON!? NOW ALL OUR EFFORTS IN PLANNING THIS TRAP WILL HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING!

HM!?

SHU SOLDIERS!?

張

THE CARTS ARE BLOCKING THEIR RETREAT! PRESS THEM BACK!

DRIVE THEM BACK TO THE BURNING CARTS!

SO IT WAS THE ENEMIES WHO LIT THE CARTS ON FIRE...!

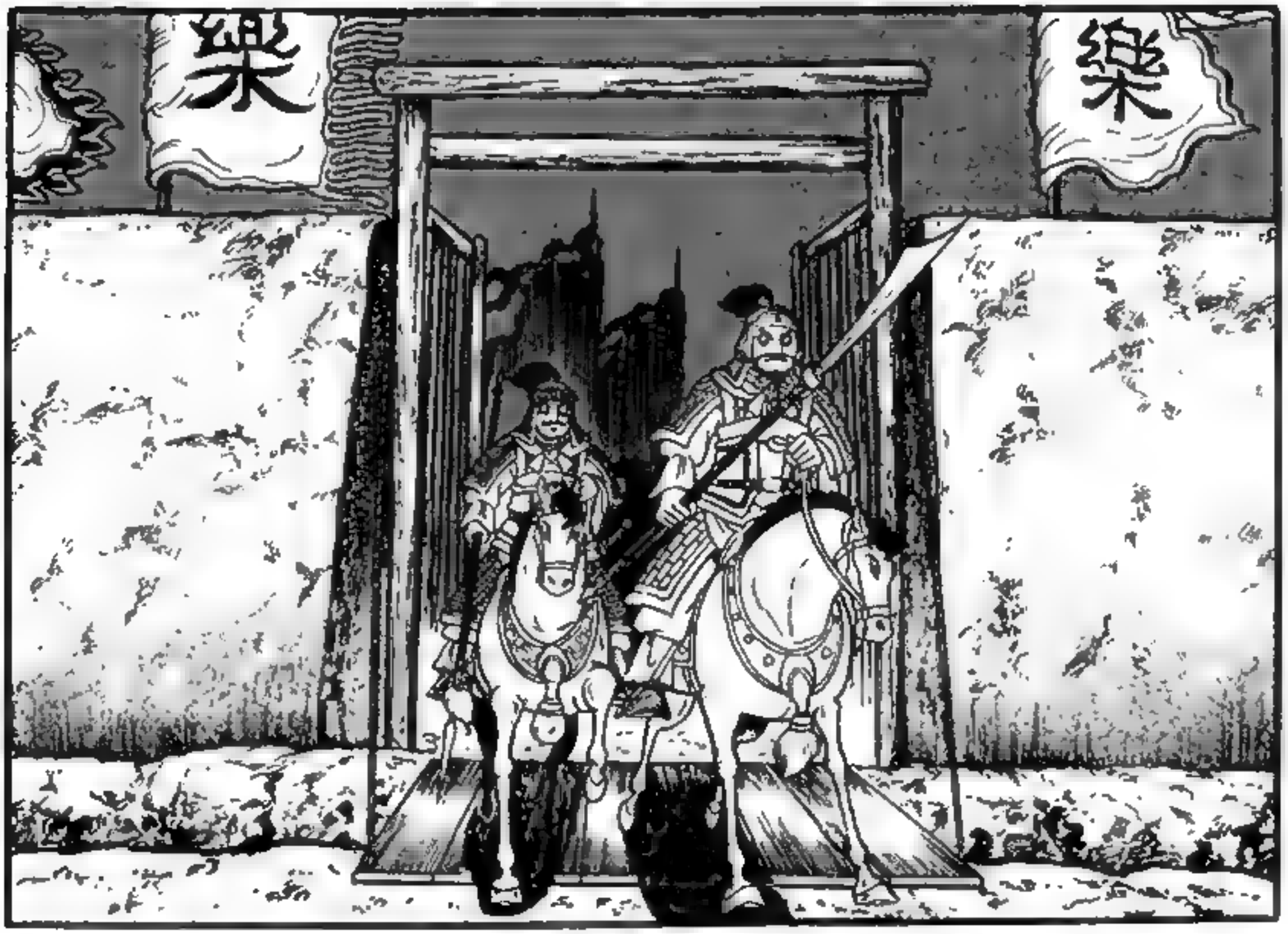
NGHH!

COME ON, MEN! DON'T LET THE TROOPS OF MA ZHONG AND ZHANG NI TAKE ALL THE CREDIT!

WE MUST RETREAT BACK TO CAMP! CUT OUT AN OPENING IN THEIR LINES!

MORE ENEMIES!? CURSES, ZHUGE LIANG MUST HAVE KNOWN THIS WAS A TRAP ALL ALONG...!

GOOD, THAT'S THE SIGNAL.
FIRE TO THE WEST OF THE HILLS, SIR!
LET'S MOVE OUT!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IT'S JUST AS COMMANDER CAO ZHEN SAID! THE ENEMY CAMPS ARE EMPTY!

LET'S STORM IN AND CAPTURE IT!

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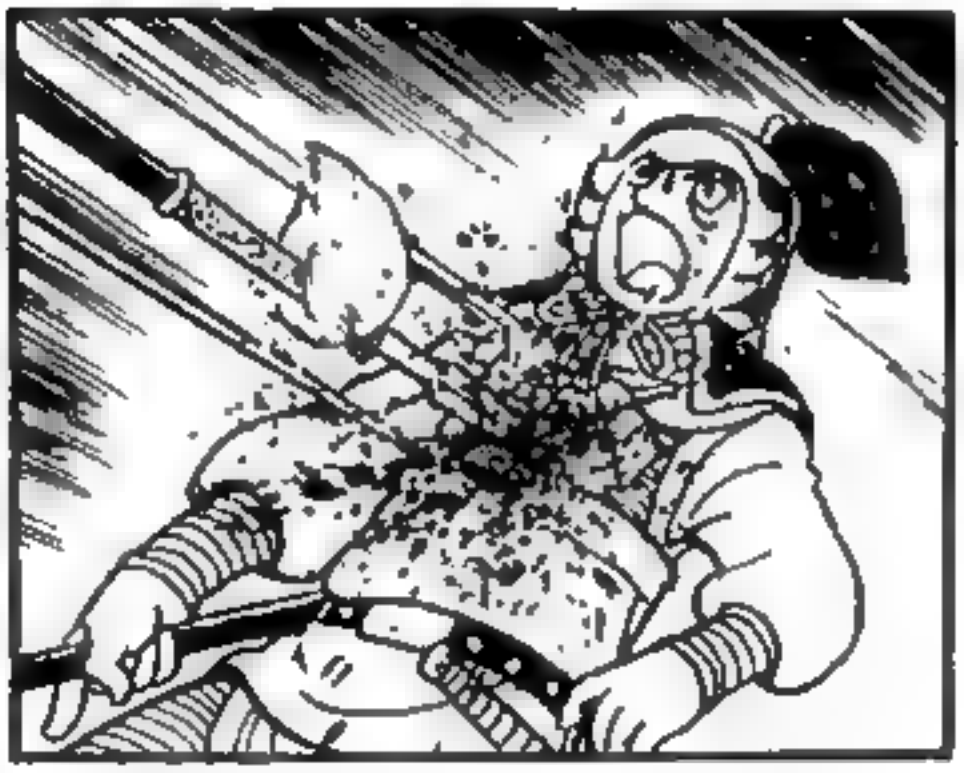
WHAT!?
AN
AMBUSH!?

SIR! ENEMIES
TO OUR
REAR!

CURSES, WE'VE BEEN HAD! OUR RETREAT ROUTE WILL BE BLOCKED OFF AT THIS RATE! WE MUST RETREAT NOW WHILE WE CAN!



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OPEN UP! THIS IS ZHANG HU!

WHY'RE YOU ATTACKING YOUR OWN SIDE!?

AGH!

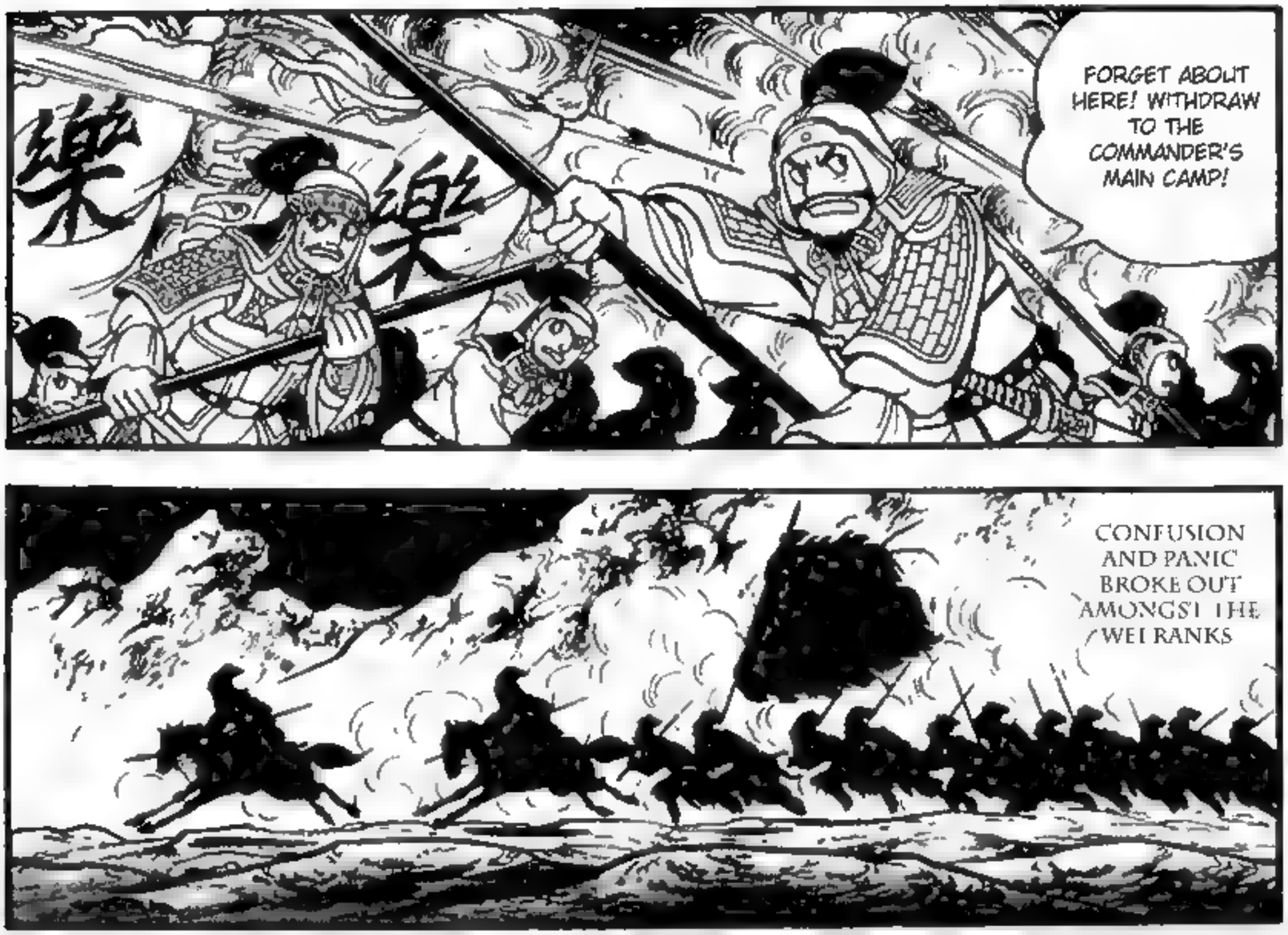
UGH!

WHA!?

HAVE YOU STILL NOT REALIZED THAT WE'VE TAKEN YOUR CAMPS WHILE YOU LEFT?

T-THEY TOOK OUR CAMPS WHILE WE RODE OUT TO TAKE THEIRS!?

WE MUST THANK YOU FOR LEAVING YOUR CAMPS EMPTY.


FORGET ABOUT HERE! WITHDRAW TO THE COMMANDER'S MAIN CAMP!
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CONFUSION AND PANIC BROKE OUT AMONGST THE WEI RANKS
COUNTLESS DEAD MEN AND HORSES WERE STREWN ACROSS THE FIELD IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE FAILED WEI TRAP
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CRUX OF STRATEGY

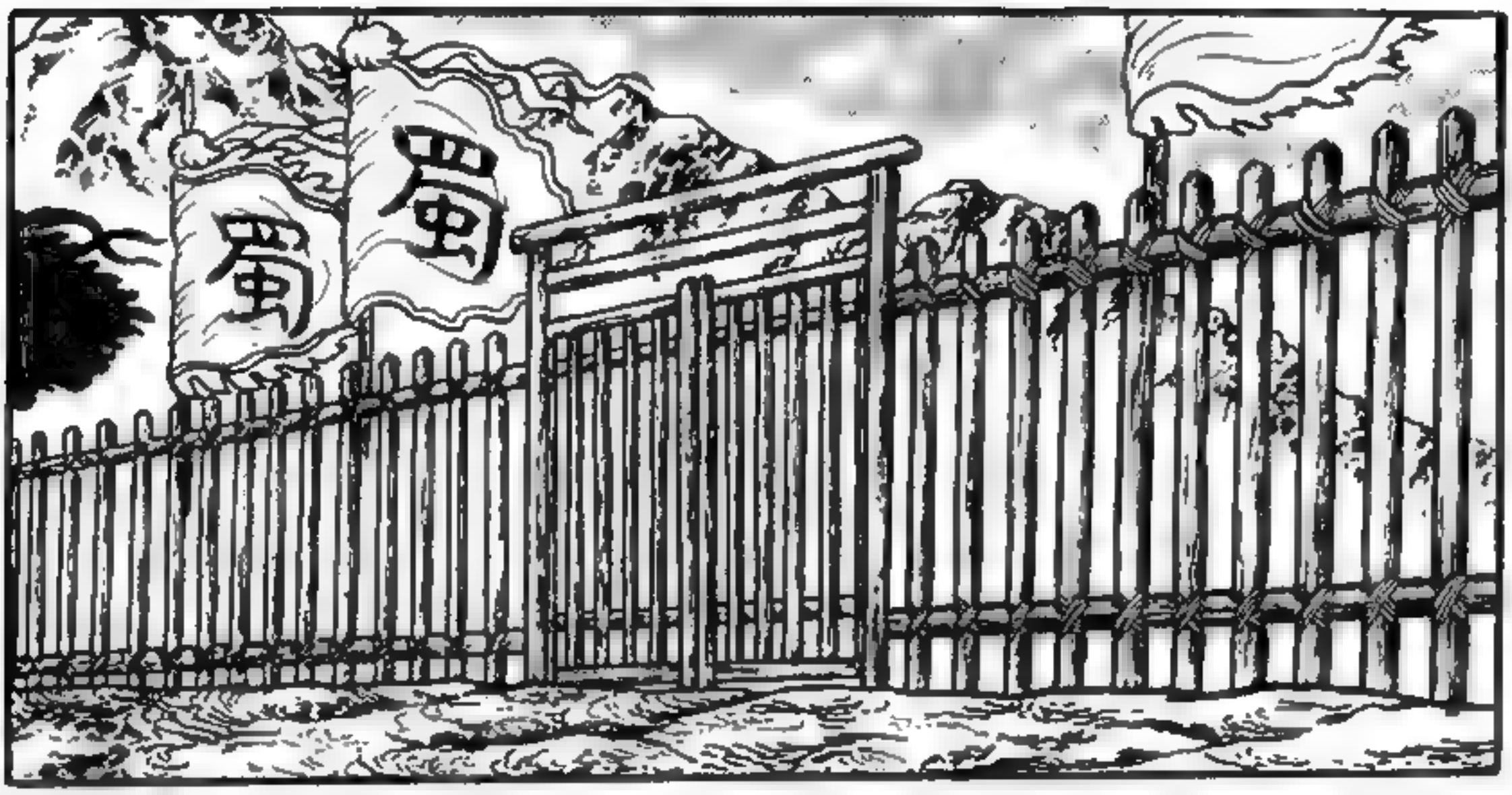
I SHAME-FULLY REPORT IT WAS ZHUGE LIANG WHO ATTACKED US BY FIRE.

W-WHAT HAPPENED!?

HE HAD SEEN THROUGH MY BAIT ALL ALONG AND USED IT AGAINST US TO AMBUSH OUR FORCES.

AGAIN AND AGAIN, ZHUGE LIANG MANAGES TO COME OUT ON TOP...

AFTER THIS STINGING
DEFEAT, CAO ZHEN DID
NOT EVEN ENTERTAIN
THE IDEA OF GOING ON
THE OFFENSIVE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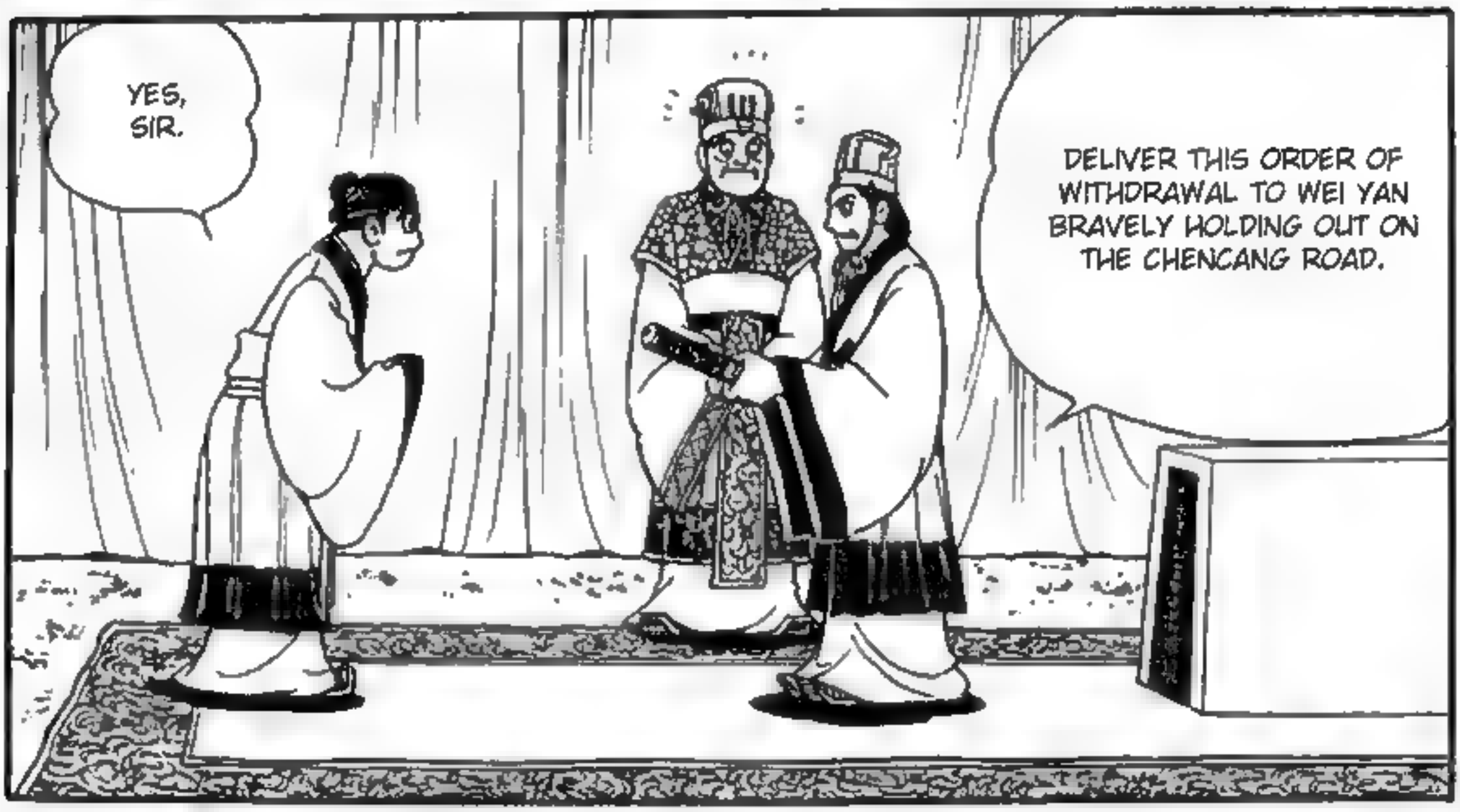
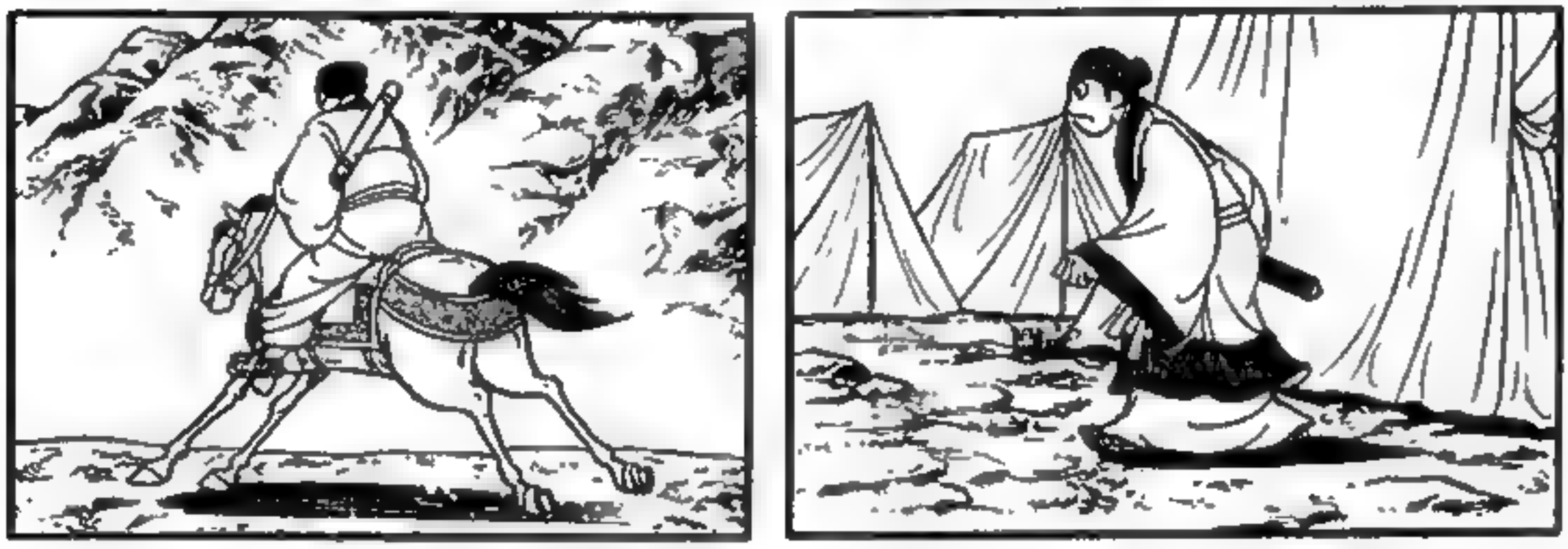

YES, SIR.
DELIVER THIS ORDER OF WITHDRAWAL TO WEI YAN BRAVELY HOLDING OUT ON THE CHENCANG ROAD.



OH, IT'S NOT JUST WEI YAN. OUR ENTIRE ARMY WILL RETURN TO HANZHONG.

MAY I ASK WHY YOU'VE ORDERED WEI YAN TO RETREAT?

CAO ZHEN WILL HAVE LEARNED HIS LESSON TO STAY ON THE DEFENSE AFTER THE RECENT LOSS. THUS, OUR GOAL OF ACHIEVING A QUICK DECISIVE VICTORY HERE IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE. REGARDLESS OF OUR MORALE, OUR SUPPLIES WILL DWINDLE.

THAT IS PRECISELY WHY WE MUST RETREAT NOW.

I BEG YOUR PARDON? DID WE NOT DELIVER ANOTHER STINGING BLOW TO THE ENEMIES? THE MORALE OF OUR TROOPS IS HIGH AS EVER.

YES, QUITE A BIT LONGER.

YES, I KNOW DWINDLING SUPPLIES ARE A MAJOR CONCERN, BUT WE'VE CAPTURED SOME ENEMY GRAIN FROM THEIR CAMPS IN THE RECENT BATTLE. IS THAT NOT ENOUGH TO ALLOW US TO HOLD OUT HERE A LITTLE LONGER?

BUT WHEN NEWS REACHES LUOYANG THAT CAO ZHEN MET ANOTHER DEFEAT IN BATTLE, WEI WILL MOST DEFINITELY SEND A LARGE ARMY TO REINFORCE THIS FRONT. WHO DO YOU THINK WILL WIN IN THIS SCENARIO? US, WITH LIMITED SUPPLIES AND TIRED SOLDIERS, OR THE WEI WITH PLENTY OF FRESH TROOPS AND AMPLE SUPPLIES DEFENDING A SECURE POSITION?

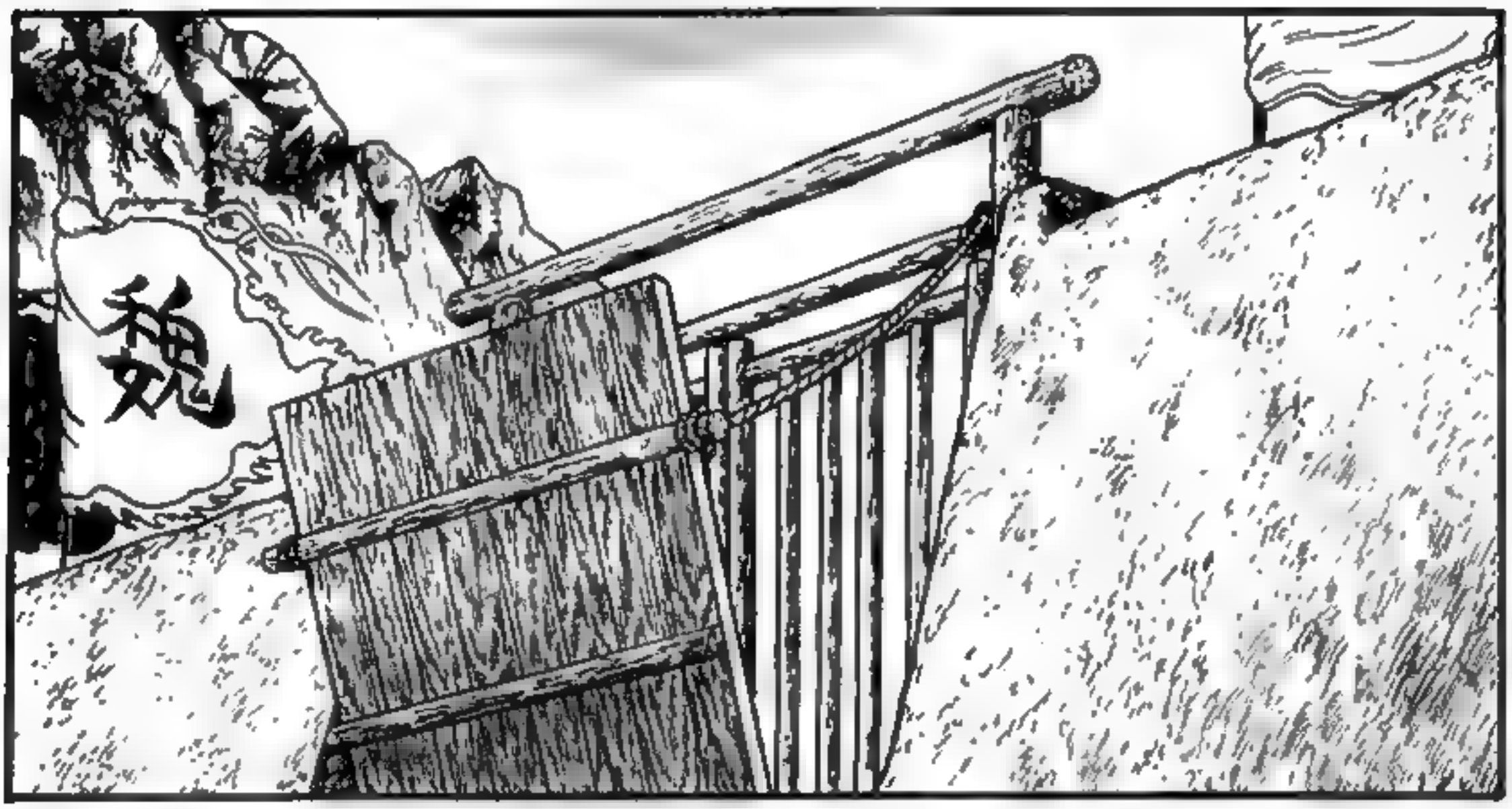
WE ARE STRATEGICALLY WITHDRAWING AFTER A VICTORY, NOT RETREATING SHAMEFULLY AFTER A DEFEAT. THE RETREAT IS NOTHING MORE THAN ANOTHER MANEUVER TO HELP US FIND A BETTER OPENING TO ATTACK WEI IN THIS ONGOING WAR. I WILL CONVINCE ANY OFFICER WHO DISAGREES.

BUT WILL THE OFFICERS NOT COMPLAIN AT ANOTHER RETREAT?

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE LAST THING CAO ZHEN WILL EXPECT US TO DO AFTER A GREAT VICTORY IS RETREAT, MAKING A SAFE RETURN POSSIBLE.

YES.

VERY WELL. I WILL PASS THE MESSAGE TO THE OTHER MEN.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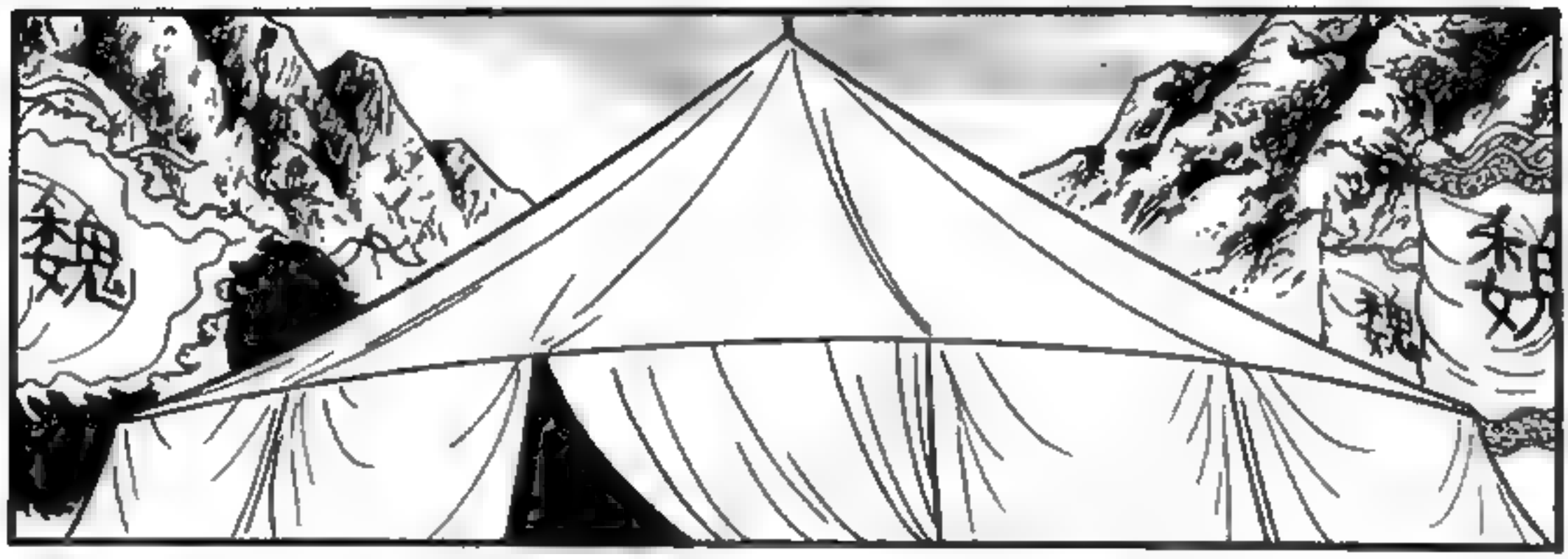
WHOSE TROOPS ARE THEY?

THIS IS ZHANG HE, LEADING THE REINFORCE-MENTS SENT BY HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY!

IDENTIFY YOUR-SELVES!

REINFORCE-MENTS!?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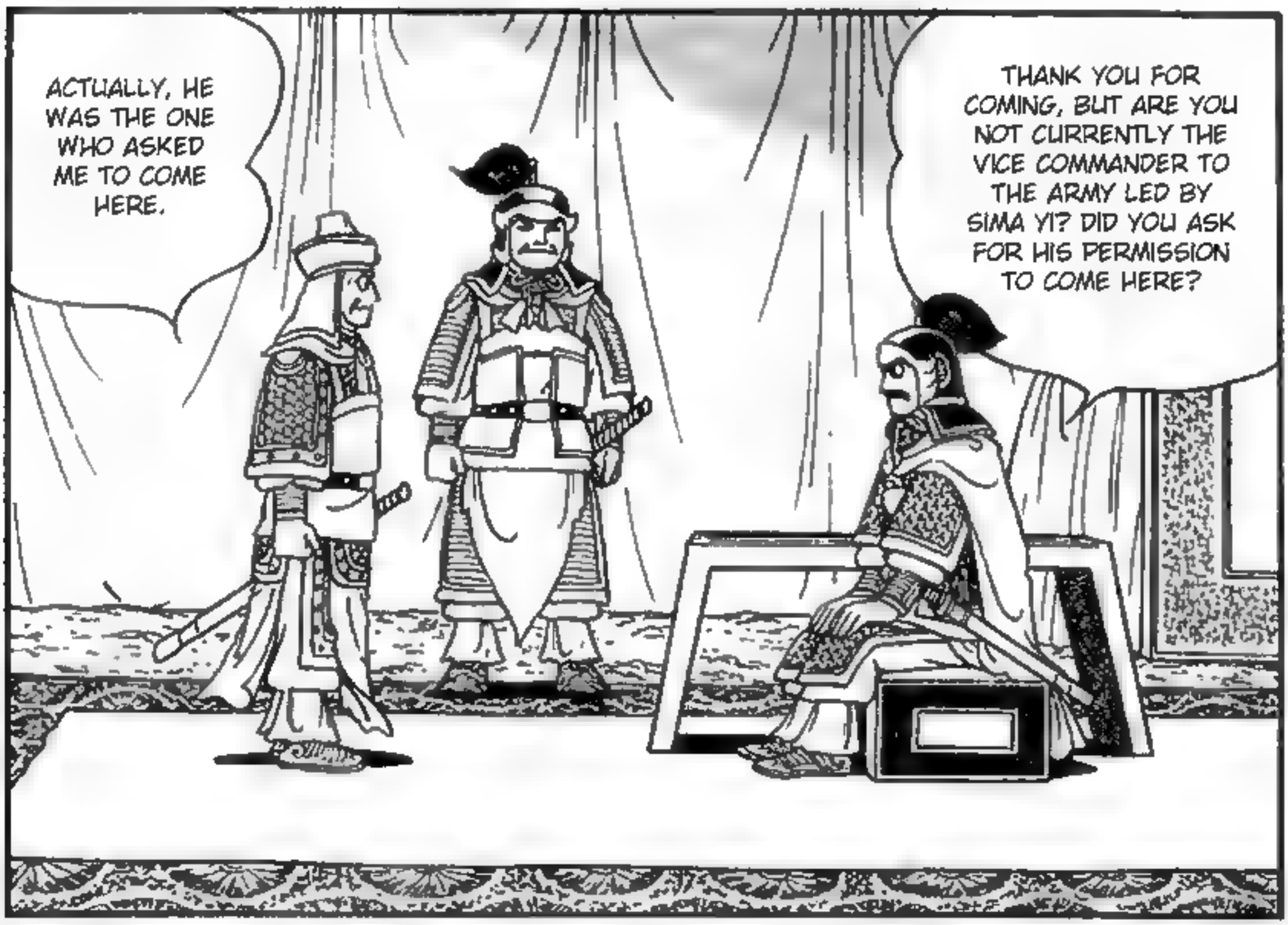
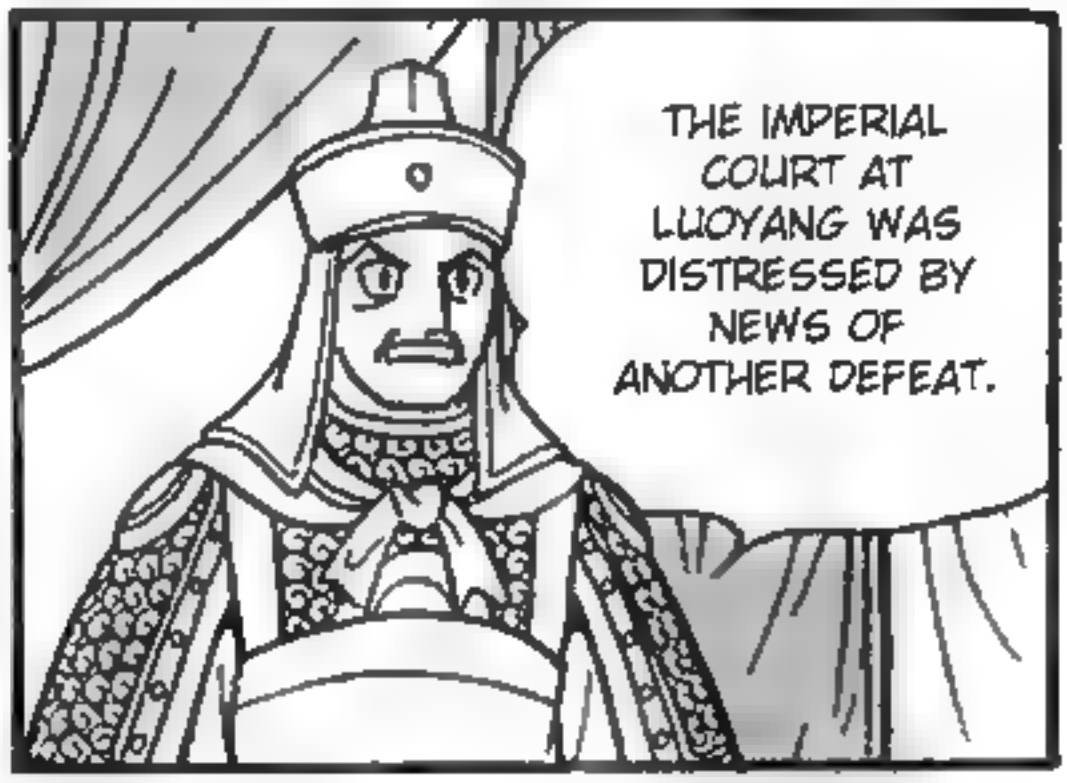

ACTUALLY, HE WAS THE ONE WHO ASKED ME TO COME HERE.
THANK YOU FOR COMING, BUT ARE YOU NOT CURRENTLY THE VICE COMMANDER TO THE ARMY LED BY SIMA YI? DID YOU ASK FOR HIS PERMISSION TO COME HERE?

IT IS ALL DUE TO MY INEPTI-TUDE. I AM ASHAMED TO FACE THE EMPEROR.


THE IMPERIAL COURT AT LUOYANG WAS DISTRESSED BY NEWS OF ANOTHER DEFEAT.

NO, I'VE BEEN TIGHTENING OUR DEFENSE MORE THAN EVER. I'VE NOT LET ANY UNITS VENTURE FAR OUTSIDE.

I'VE HEARD IT WAS SUN LI WHO LED THE ATTACK AND FAILED, BUT HAVE YOU SCOUTED THE ENEMY'S MOVEMENTS SINCE THEN?

?

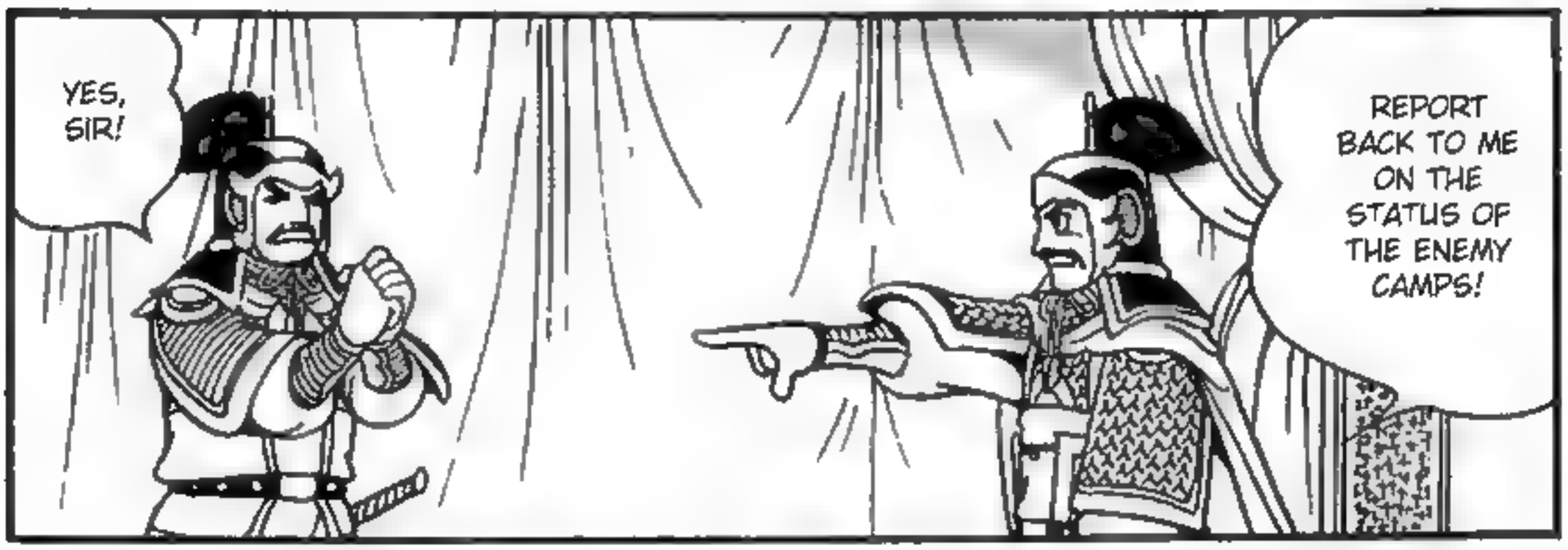
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

YOU MUST NOT DO THAT, SIR!

BEFORE SETTING OFF FOR HERE, SIMA YI STERNLY WARNED ME THAT IF OUR FORCES WERE TO WIN ANY ENGAGEMENTS, THE ENEMIES WILL STUBBORNLY HOLD OUT. HOWEVER, IF WE WERE TO LOSE AN ENGAGEMENT, THE ENEMIES MAY WITHDRAW AT ANY TIME. THAT IS THE CRUX OF ZHUGE LIANG'S STRATEGY.

YES, PLEASE SEND OUT SCOUTS RIGHT AWAY, SIR!

THEY'LL RETREAT AFTER WINNING!?


YES, SIR!
REPORT BACK TO ME ON THE STATUS OF THE ENEMY CAMPS!

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女儿
IT'S JUST AS SIMA YI WARNED!
YES, ONLY THE BANNERS AND FLAGS WERE LEFT STANDING.
WHAT!? THEIR CAMP IS EMPTY!?
R-RIGHT!
WE MUST NOT MISS THIS GOLDEN CHANCE!
COMMANDER! PLEASE GIVE THE ORDER TO SEND A PURSUIT FORCE!

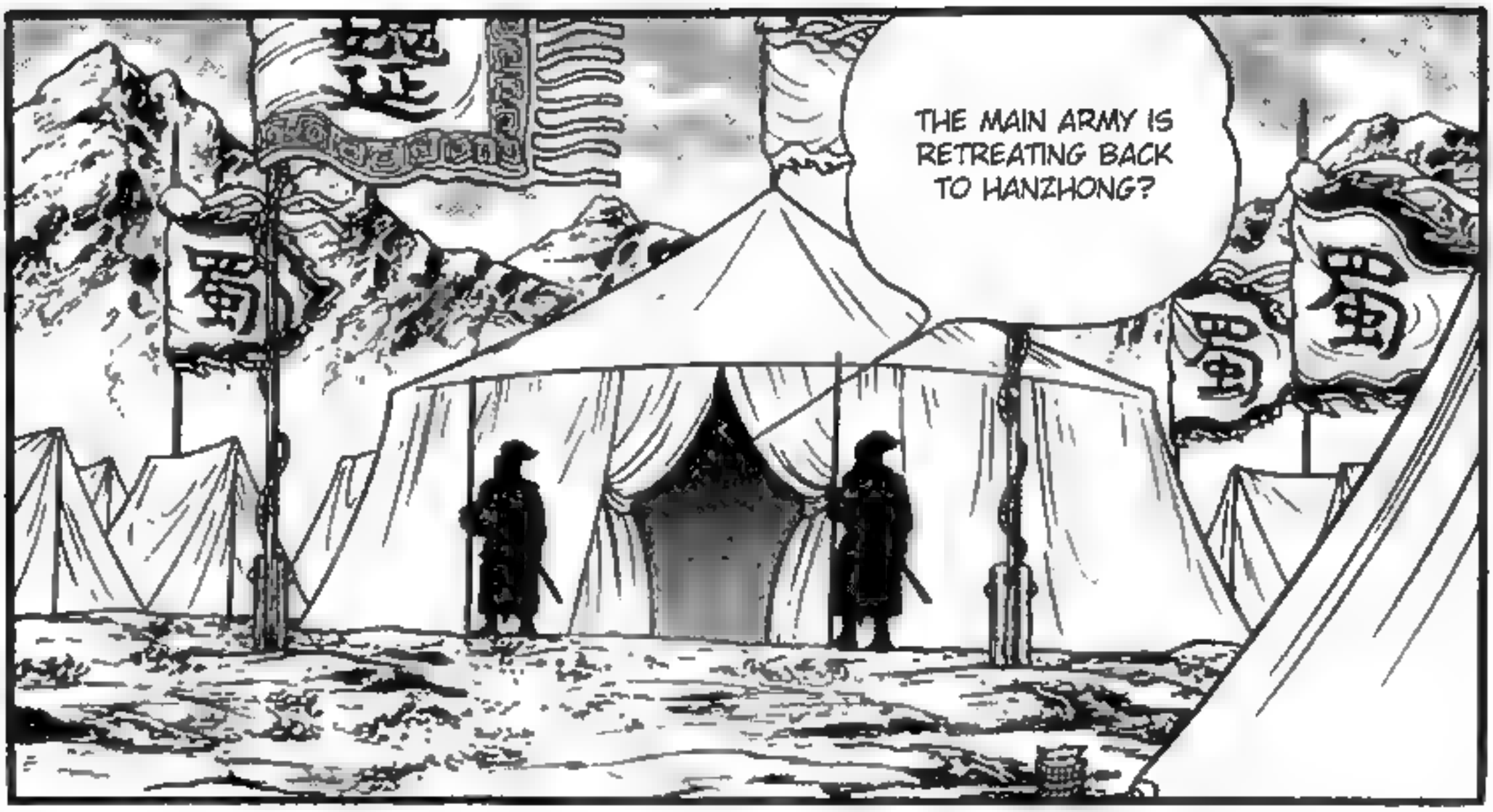
WE MUST PURSUE THE ENEMIES!

.....

HOWEVER, IT WAS TOO LATE.
UNABLE TO GLIMPSE EVEN AN ENEMY SHADOW, ZHANG HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RETURN

HOW CAN ONE MAN BE SO FRIGHTENINGLY DAUNTING...? I CAN BARELY MUSTER THE CONFIDENCE TO FACE KONGMING AGAIN...

WANG SHUANG FALLS


THE MAIN ARMY IS RETREATING BACK TO HANZHONG?
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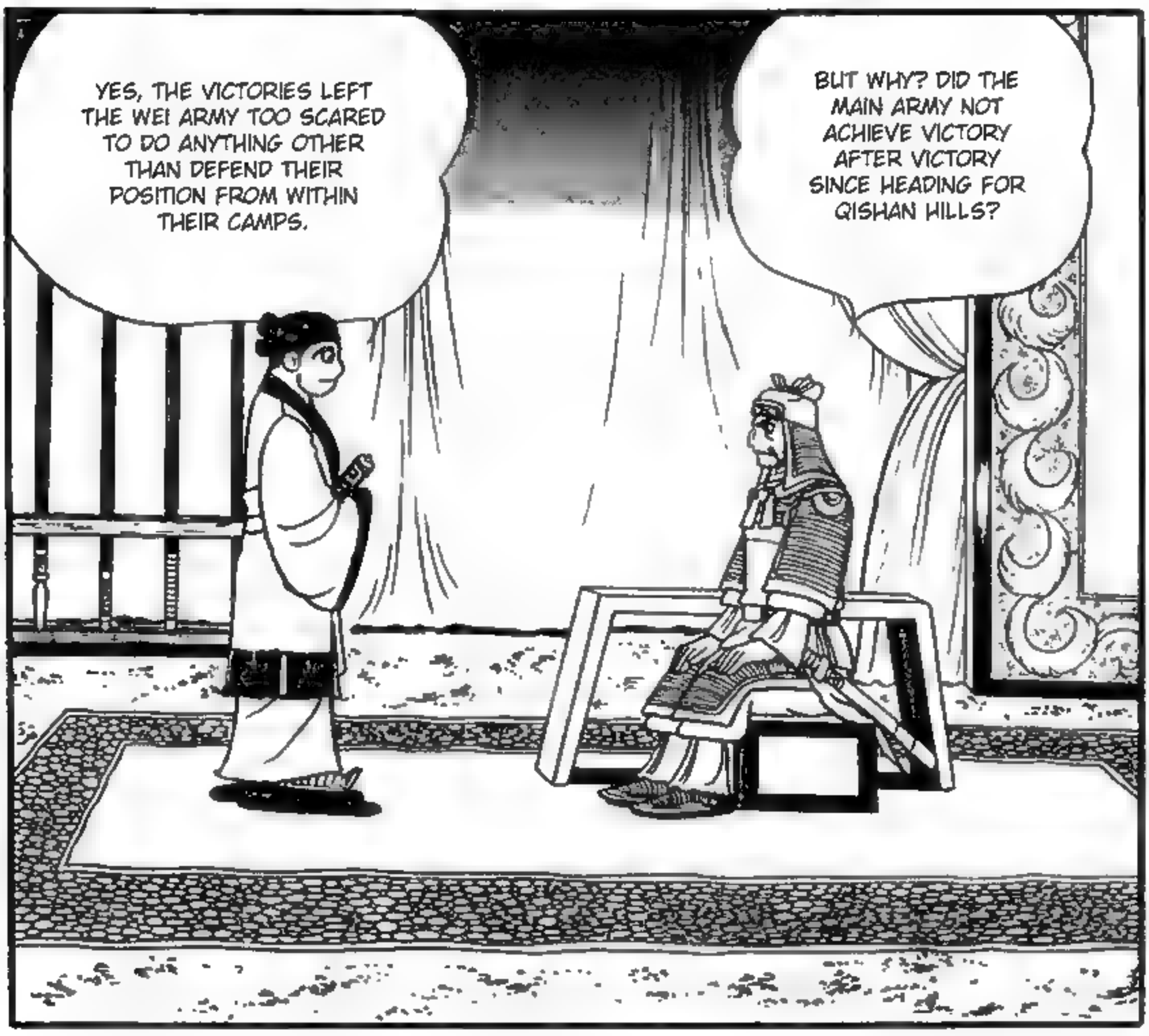

YES, THE VICTORIES LEFT THE WEI ARMY TOO SCARED TO DO ANYTHING OTHER THAN DEFEND THEIR POSITION FROM WITHIN THEIR CAMPS.
BUT WHY? DID THE MAIN ARMY NOT ACHIEVE VICTORY AFTER VICTORY SINCE HEADING FOR QISHAN HILLS?

BECAUSE OF OUR SUPPLIES.

THEN WHY THE RETREAT?

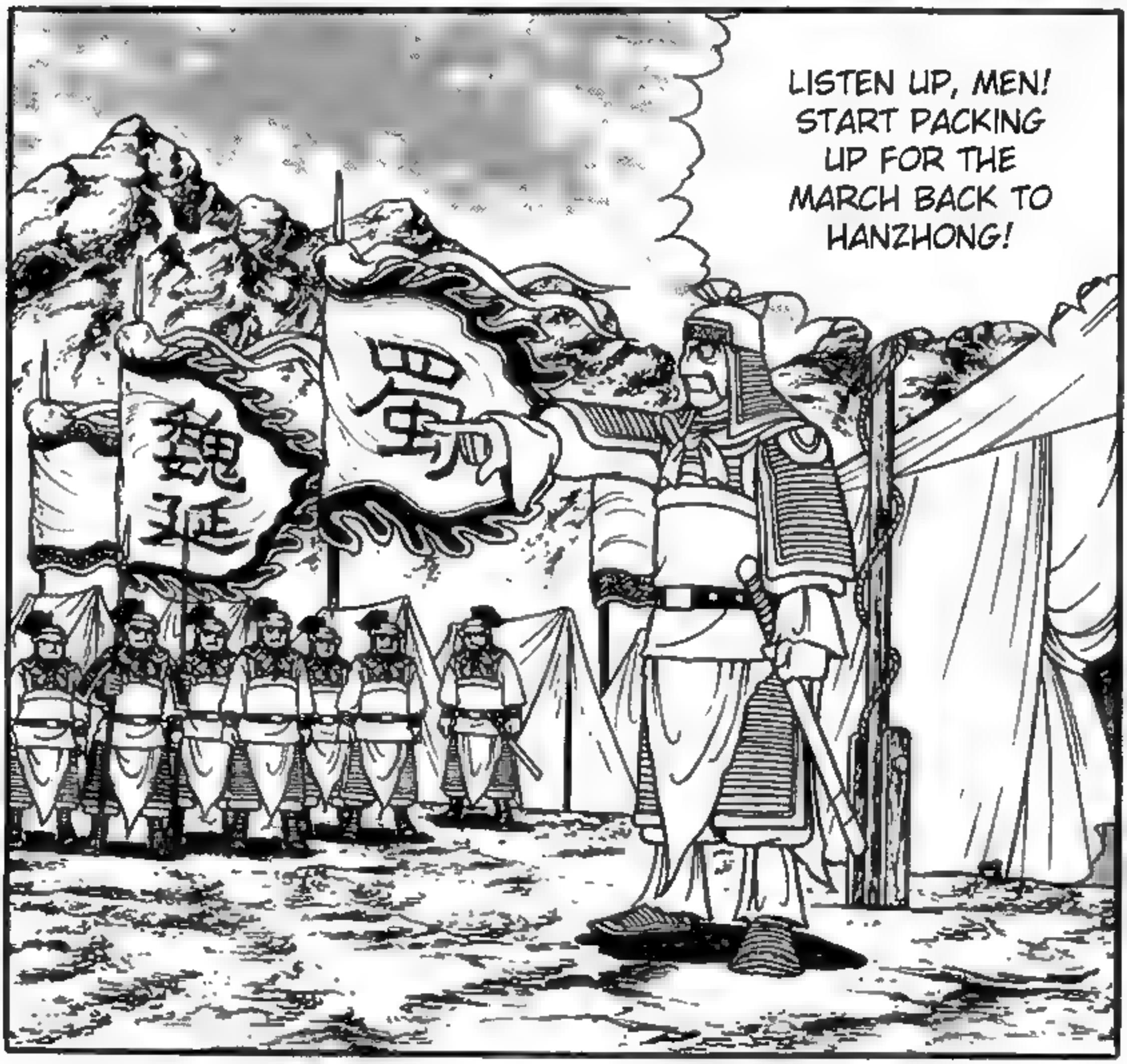
HM...

THE ENEMIES ARE NOW FULLY GEARED FOR A LONG, DRAWN-OUT CONFLICT WITH A FRESH ARMY COMING TO REINFORCE. AS OUR CHANCES OF WINNING AGAINST A FRESH AND WELL SUPPLIED ENEMY FORCE WITH FRESH TROOPS ARE SLIM, THE GENERAL OF THE RIGHT HAS DECIDED TO RETREAT AND LOOK FOR A BETTER OPENING IN THE FUTURE.

I SEE.

THESE ARE HIS DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS TO YOU ON HOW TO RETREAT SO AS TO FEND OFF AN ENEMY PURSUIT FORCE.

UNDERSTOOD, I WILL WITHDRAW AT ONCE.


LISTEN UP, MEN! START PACKING UP FOR THE MARCH BACK TO HANZHONG!
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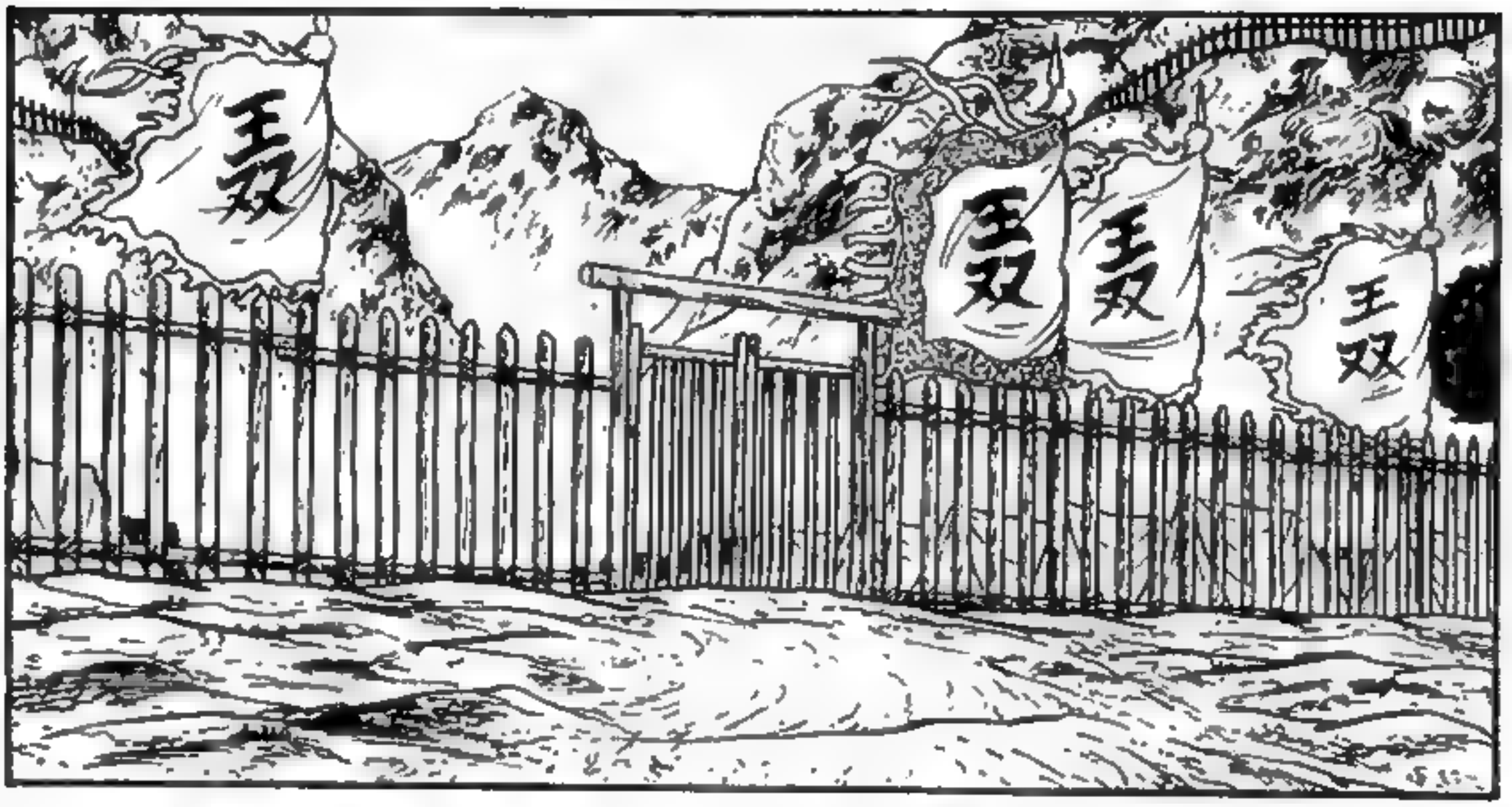
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WHAT IS IT?

GENERAL WANG SHUANG!

WHAT!?

THE ENEMY FORCE HAS BEGUN TO RETREAT!

NOW'S OUR CHANCE! IT'S TIME FOR A PURSUIT!

YES, THEY'VE ABRUPTLY DECIDED TO WITHDRAW AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

ARE YOU SURE!?

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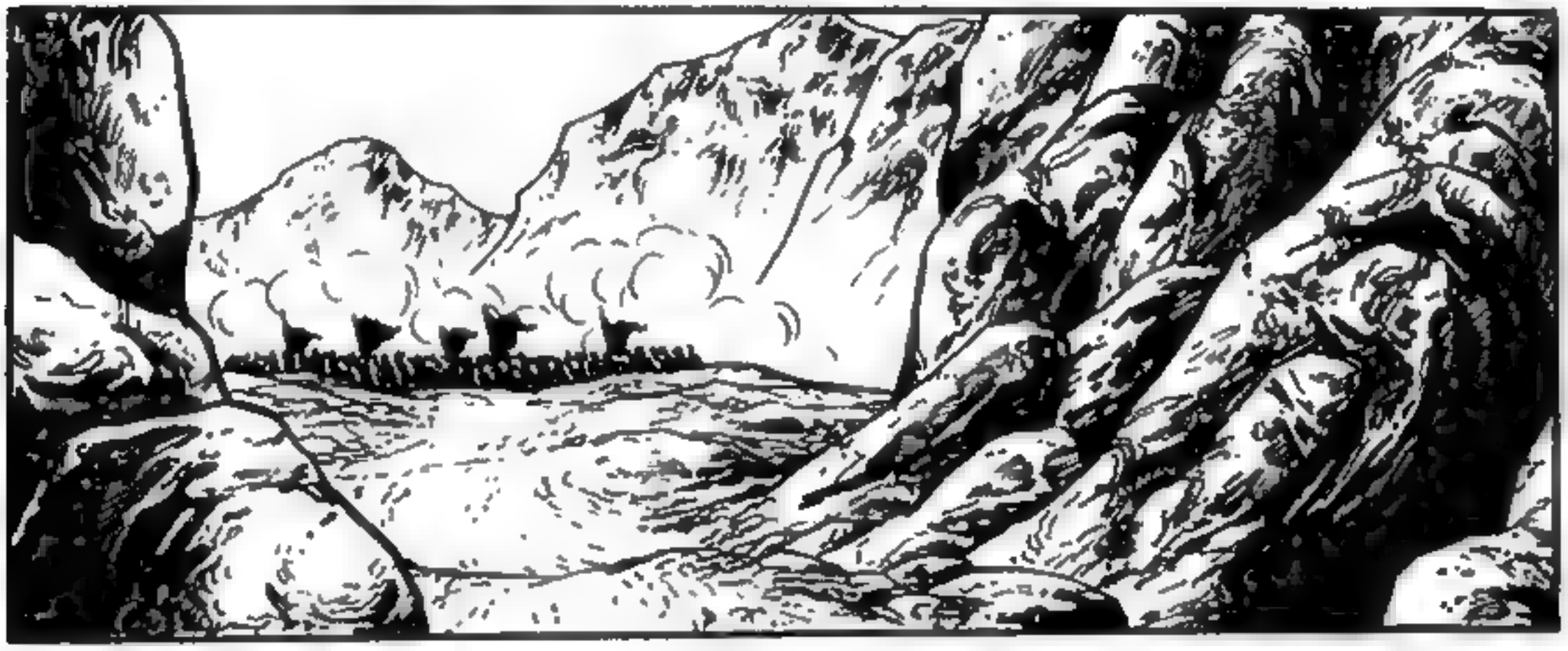
QUICKLY, MEN! WE CAN'T LET THE ENEMIES ESCAPE SAFELY!

HM?



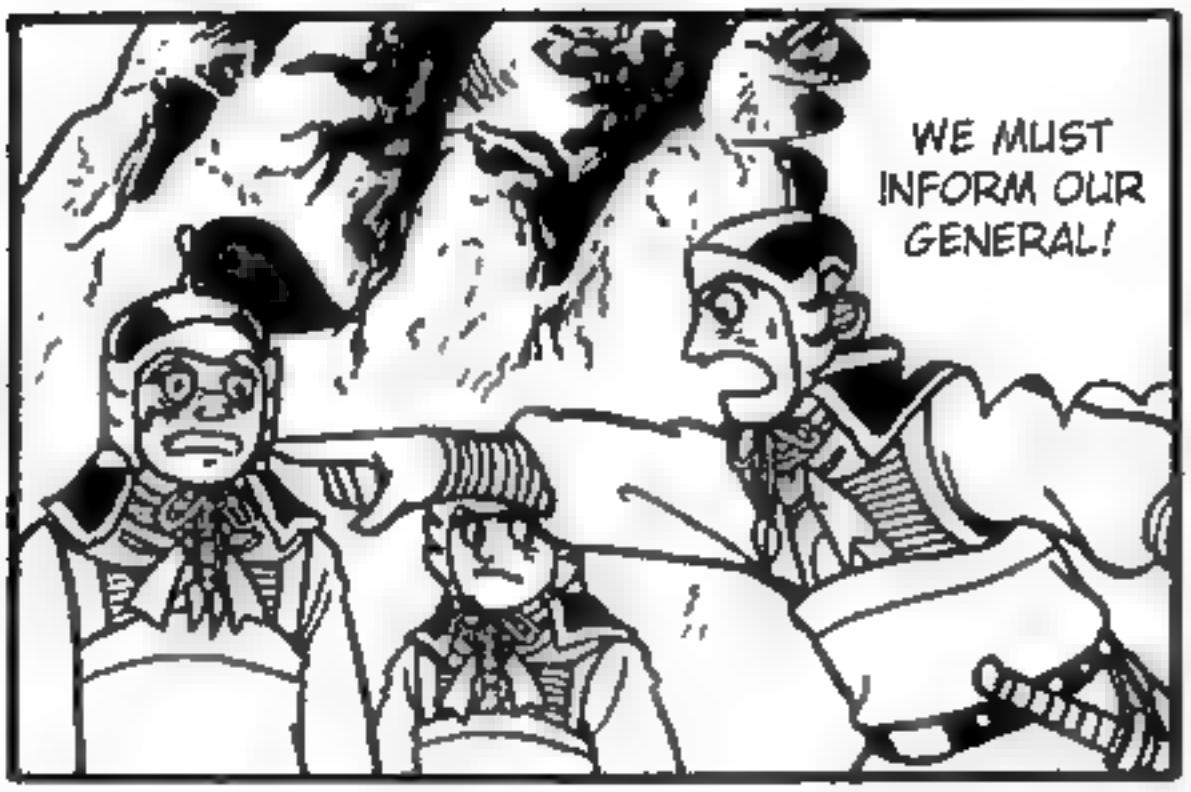
FASTER!
THERE THEY ARE!

PANT
PANT

YOU'RE...
HUFF HUFF
GOING TOO
FAST,
GENERAL!

HUFF
HUFF
I CAN'T...
I CAN'T
KEEP UP...

HM?


WE MUST INFORM OUR GENERAL!

SOMETHING'S WRONG! OUR CAMP IS ON FIRE!

HUFF HUFF

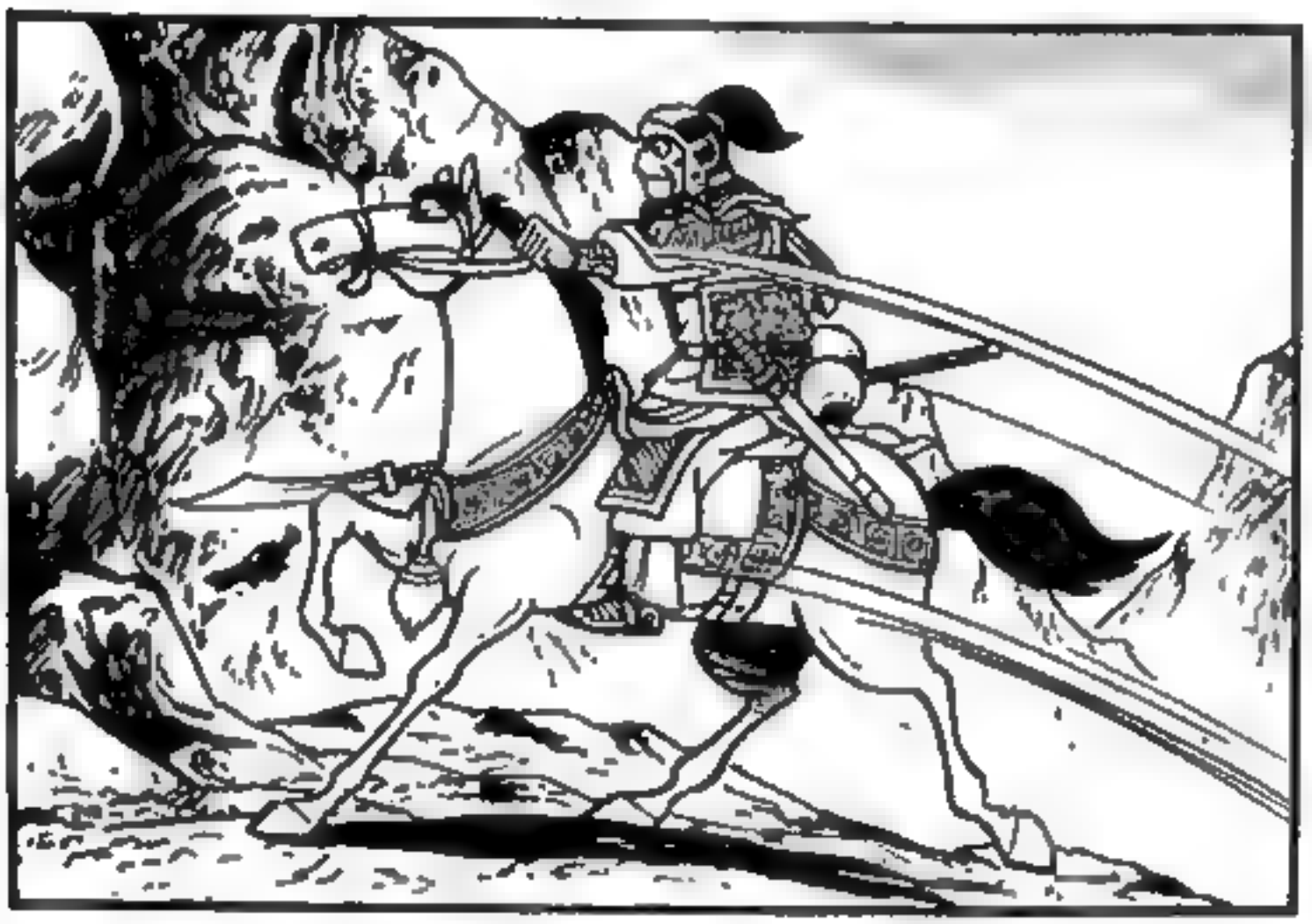
WHAT IS IT!?

GENERAL! IT'S AN EMERGENCY!

?
WHAT?

THERE MUST...
STILL BE...
SOME ENEMIES LEFT...
LEFT BEHIND, SIR!

WHAT!?



BECAUSE OUR...
OUR CAMP IS
ON FIRE!

AHHH!

CURSES! HEAD BACK TO CAMP!

HM?

WHO'S THERE?

WEI YAN OF SHU!

DIE!

W-WHA?

WHO'S NEXT!?

AHH!
SIR!

REMAIN CALM! HE'S ONLY ONE MAN!

SILENCE!

OH REALLY NOW?

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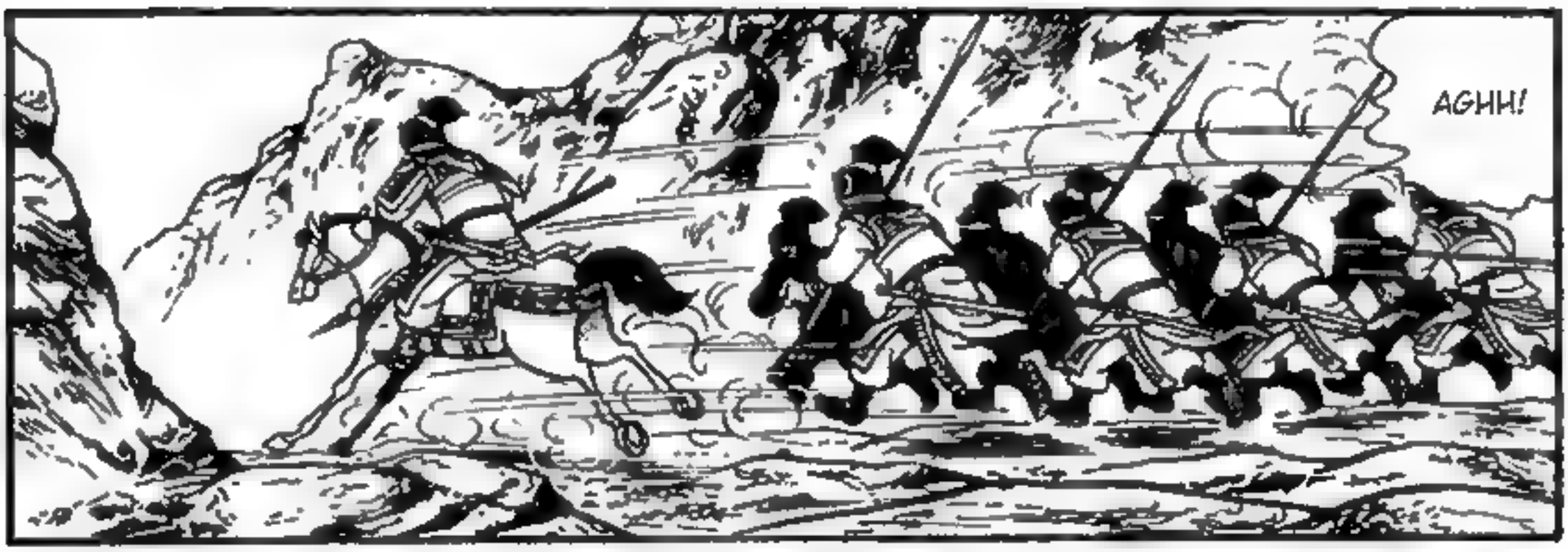
HM?

HM?

RETREAT! THIS IS A TRAP!

HIDDEN TROOPS!


AGHH!

THAT'LL DO.

HEH.

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魏延
THERE WERE ONLY 30 SOLDIERS WHO REGROUPED WITH WEI YAN AT THIS TIME

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魏延
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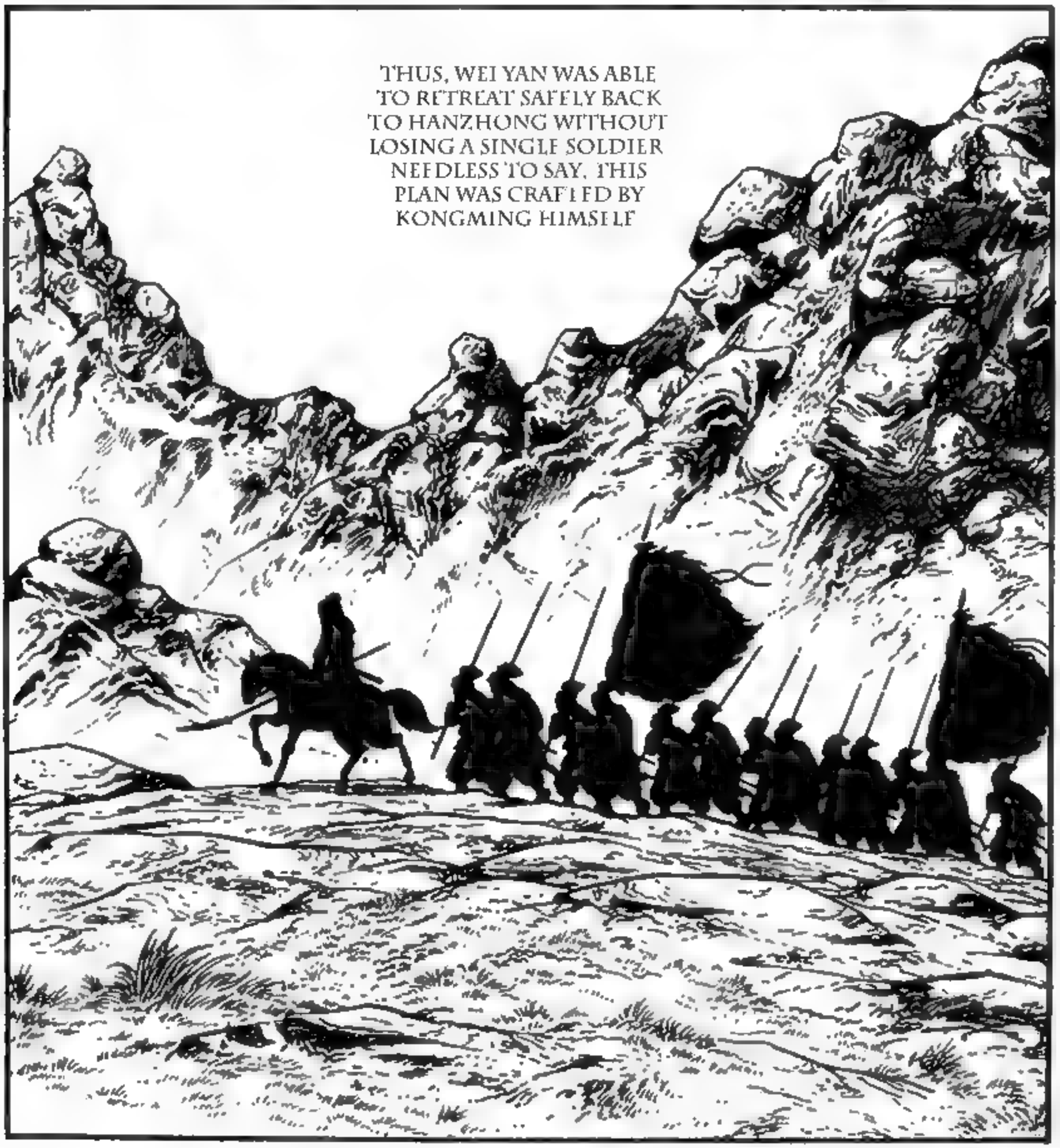
THE ENEMIES NEVER GUESSED I ONLY LEFT BEHIND 30 SOLDIERS TO BURN THEIR CAMPS. HAD THEY HELD THEIR GROUND, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN IN DIRE TROUBLE.


THUS, WEI YAN WAS ABLE TO RETREAT SAFELY BACK TO HANZHONG WITHOUT LOSING A SINGLE SOLDIER NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS PLAN WAS CRAFTED BY KONGMING HIMSELF

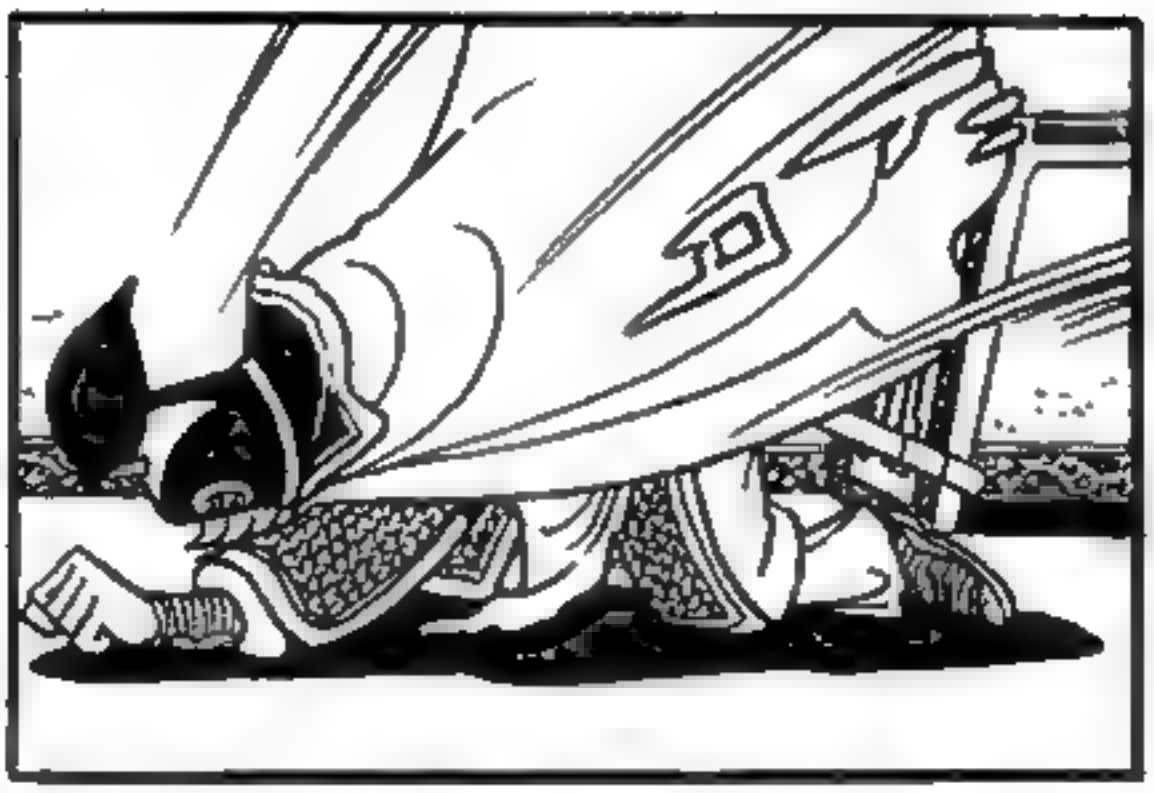
YES, WEI YAN TOOK THE GENERAL BY SURPRISE.

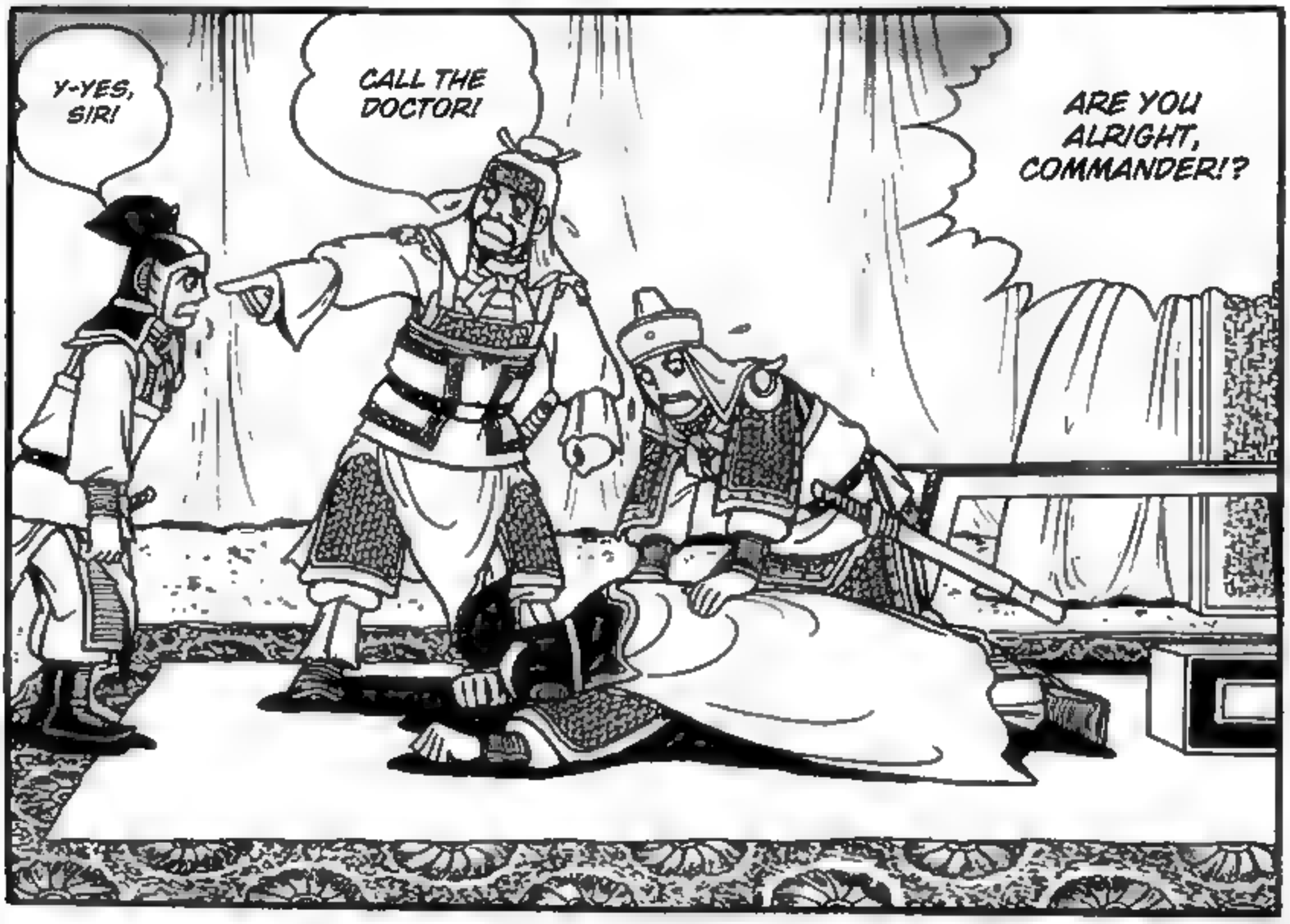
WANG SHUANG WAS SLAIN!?

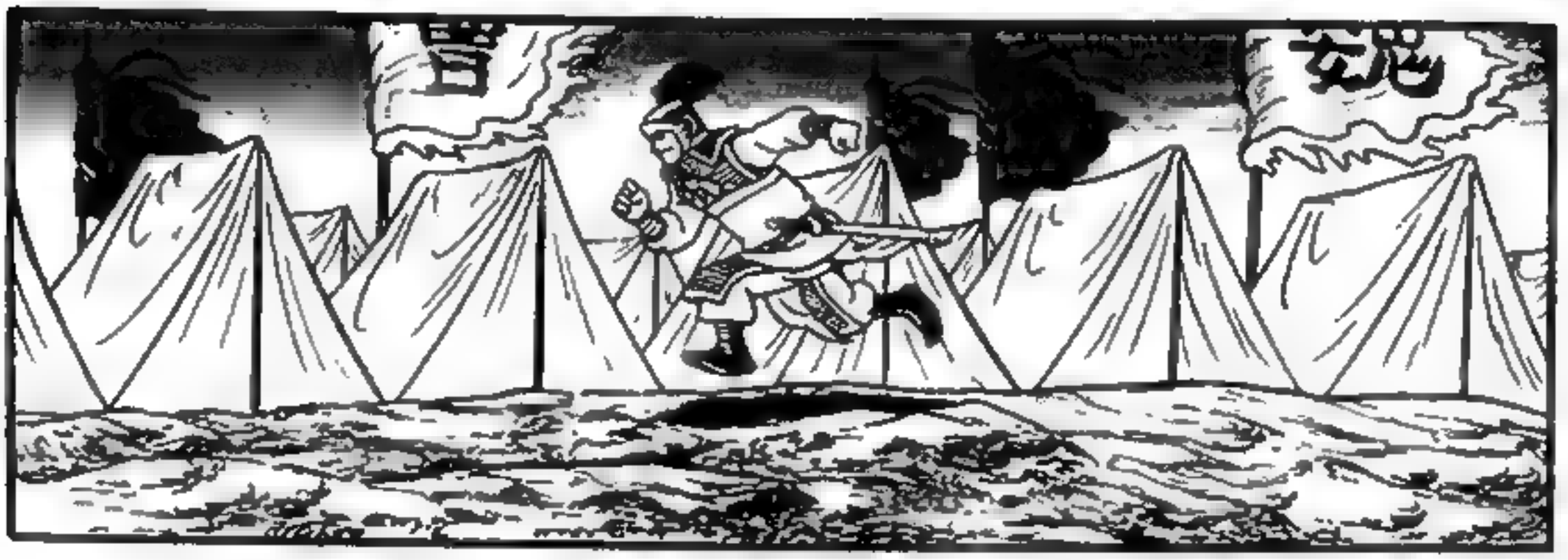
NGH!

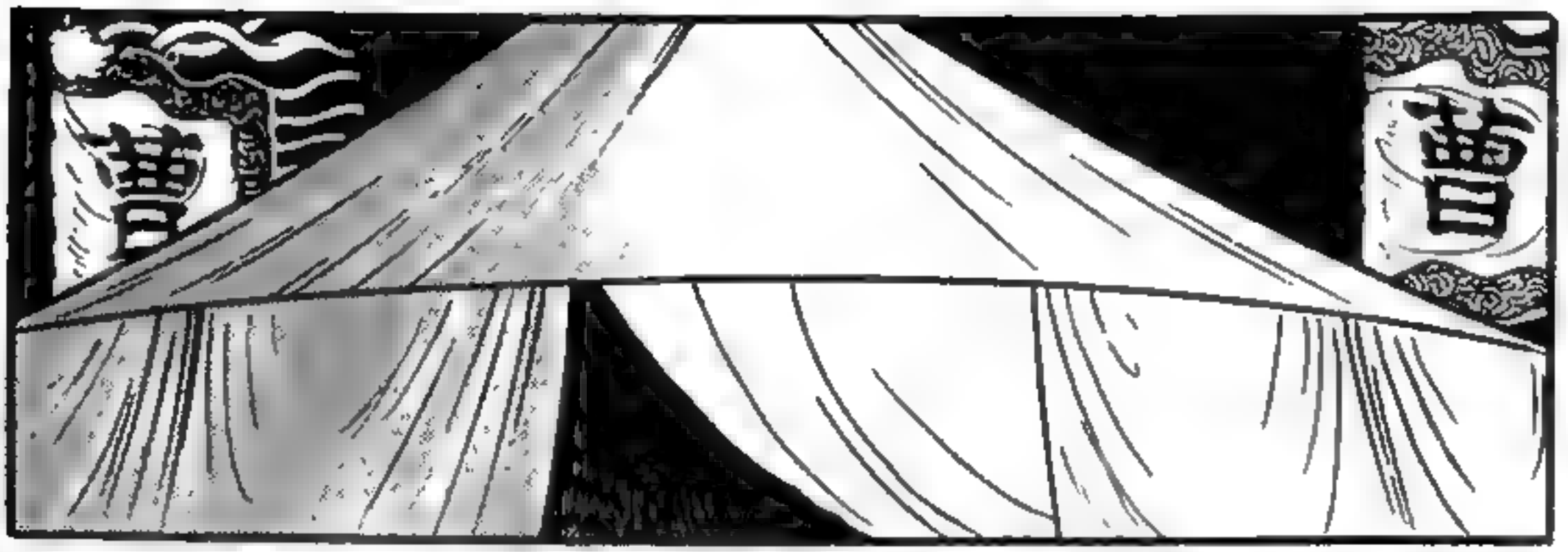
W... WANG... W-WANG SHUANG D-DIED...?

COM-
MANDER!




Y-YES,
SIR!
CALL THE
DOCTOR!
ARE YOU
ALRIGHT,
COMMANDER!?




PLEASE DRINK THIS MEDICINE, SIR.
YOUR REST SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED ABOVE ALL RIGHT NOW.
I WILL EXCUSE MYSELF NOW, SIR.

I BELIEVE THE STRESSES OF THE RECENT CAMPAIGN HAS TAKEN A GREAT TOLL ON HIS HEALTH. I RECOMMEND HE RETURN TO LUOYANG AND REST LE SURELY UNTIL HE IS BACK TO FULL HEALTH.

HE IS FINE FOR NOW.

HOW IS OUR COMMANDER, DOCTOR?

AS A COMMANDER WHO MUST SHOULDER ALL THE BLAME, HE MUST HAVE BEEN MORE STRESSED OUT THAN ANY OF US.

NOT TOO SURPRISING CONSIDERING EVERY MOVE HE MADE DURING THE PAST TWO CAMPAIGNS WAS BEING READ BY ZHUGE LIANG.

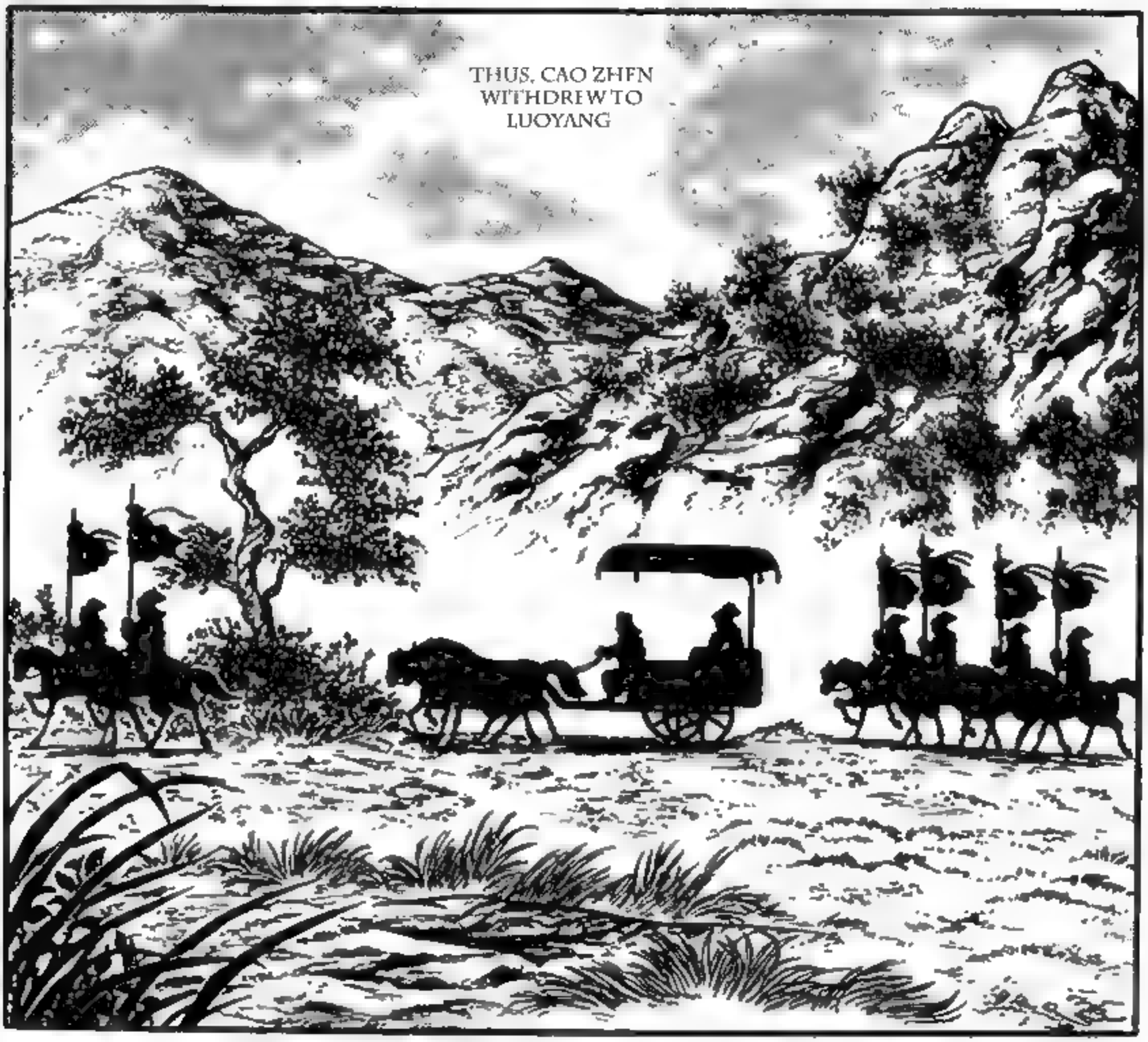
SO THE CAUSE IS STRESS...

I'VE CALLED YOU TODAY, OF COURSE, TO DISCUSS MY HEALTH. A SICK COMMANDER IS NOT FIT TO MAKE SOUND JUDGMENTS ON THE FRONT LINES OF WAR.

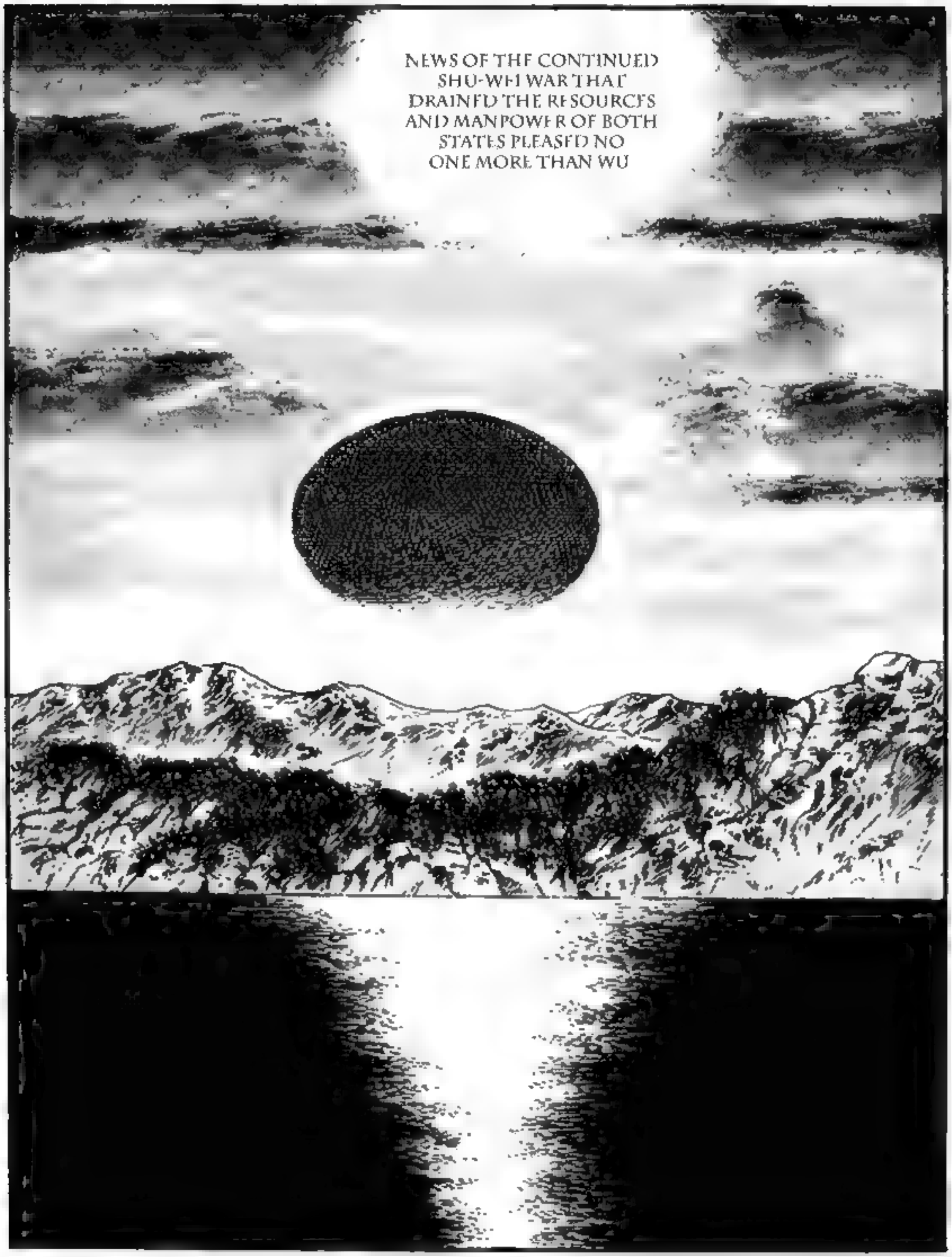
NOW THAT SHU FORCES HAVE WITHDRAWN, I TOO, WILL WITHDRAW TO LUOYANG TO RECOVER.

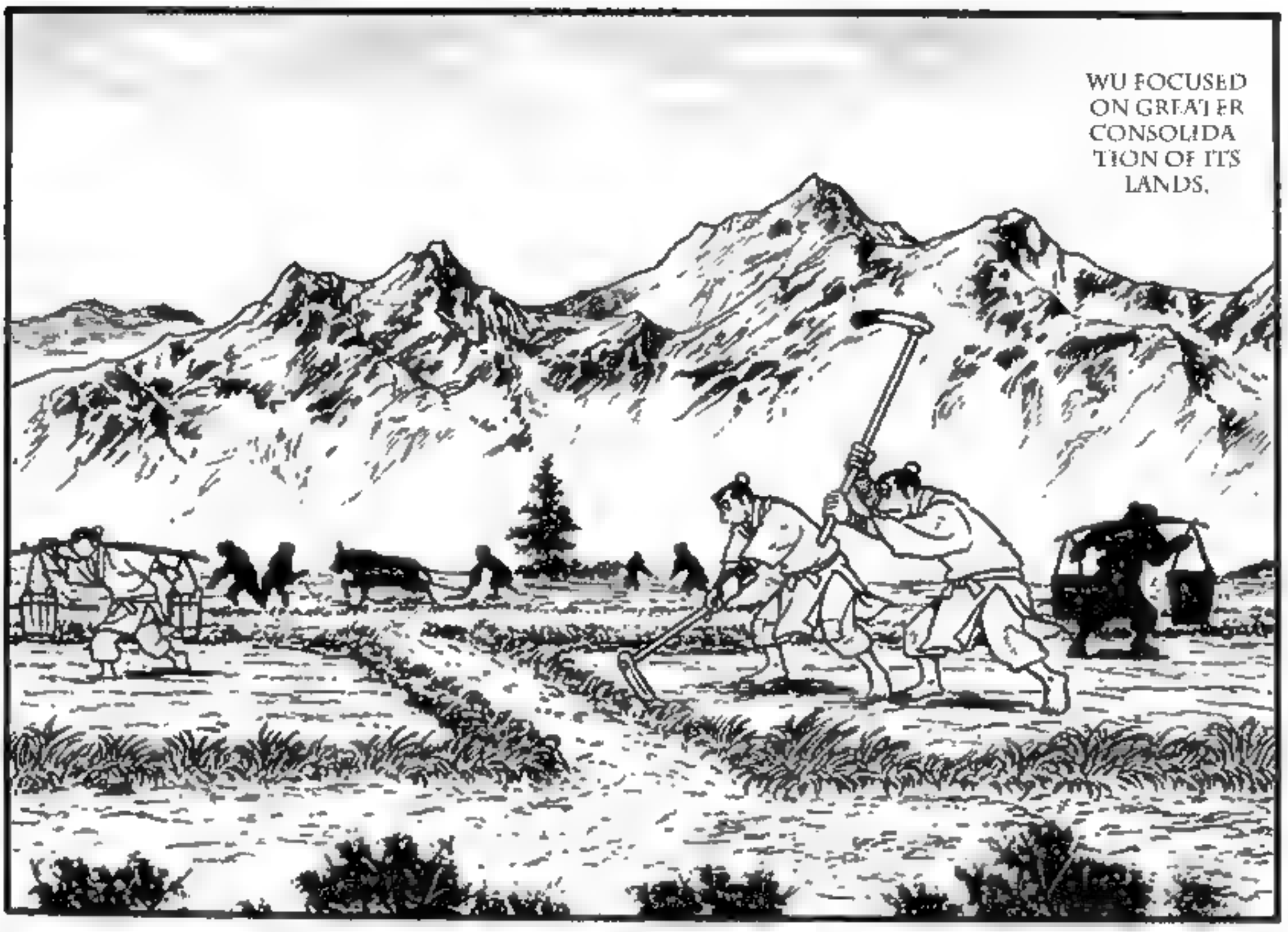
YES, WE WILL NOT BE LAX IN OUR DUTIES.

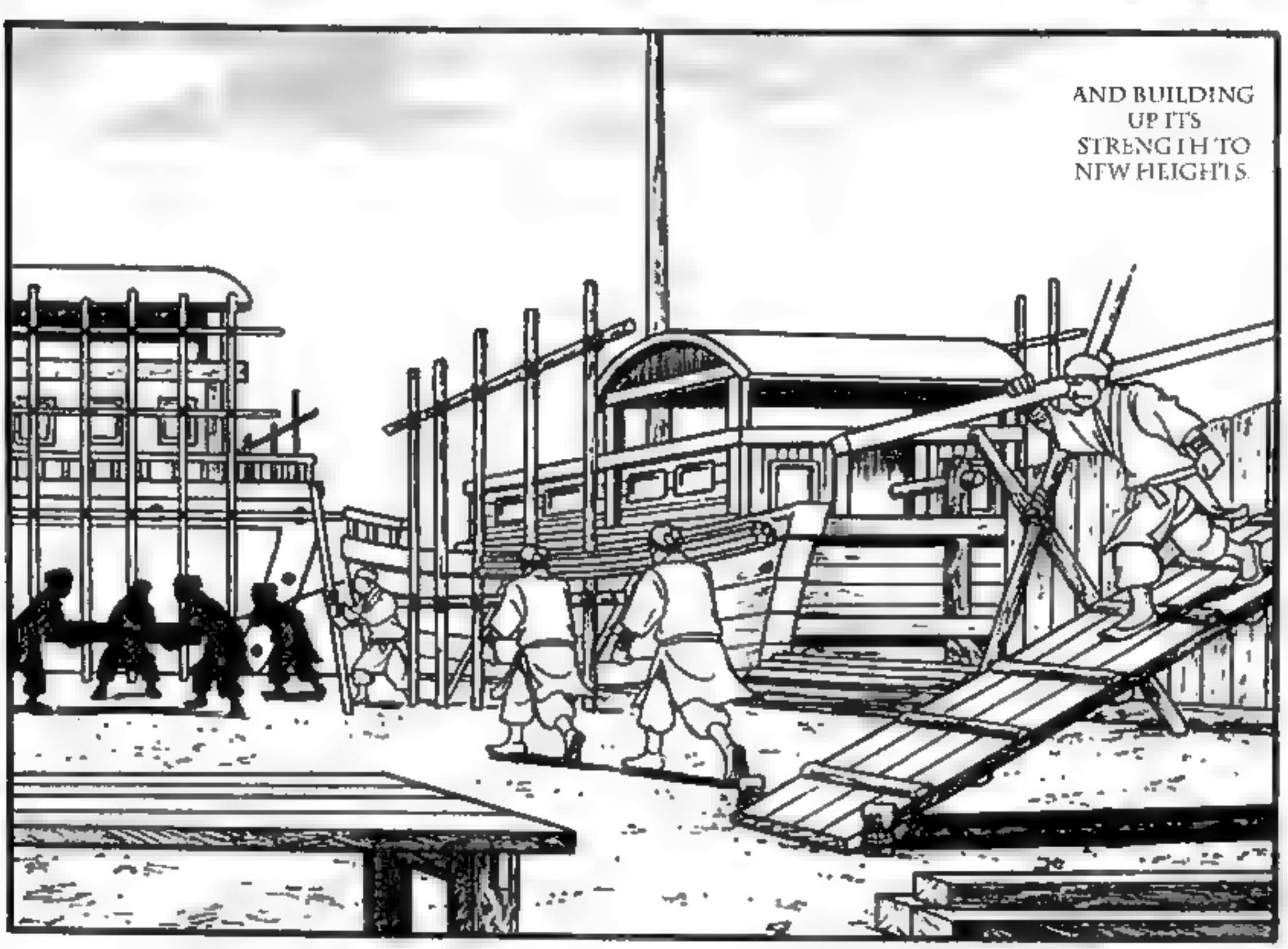
I LEAVE YOU THREE GENERALS IN CHARGE OF GUARDING THE PASSAGE TO CHANG'AN IN MY ABSENCE.


THUS, CAO ZHEN WITHDREW TO LUOYANG

EMPEROR SUN QUAN




WU FOCUSED ON GREATER CONSOLIDATION OF ITS LANDS.


AND BUILDING UP ITS STRENGTH TO NEW HEIGHTS.

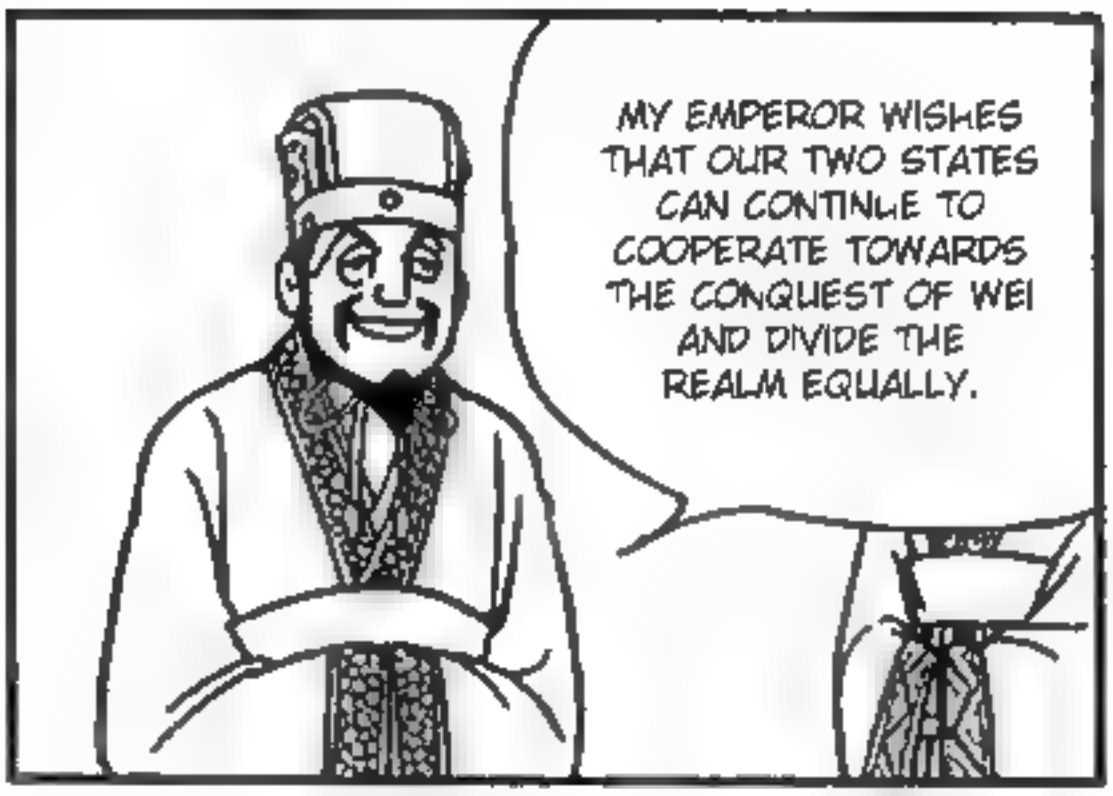
IN THE 8TH YEAR OF THE YELLOW MIGHT ERA (229 AD), SUN QUAN DECIDED TO TITLE HIMSELF AS EMPEROR, PLACING HIM ON EQUAL STANDING AS THE WEI AND SHU EMPERORS. HE ACCORDINGLY BEGAN A NEW ERA TITLED, "YELLOW DRAGON."

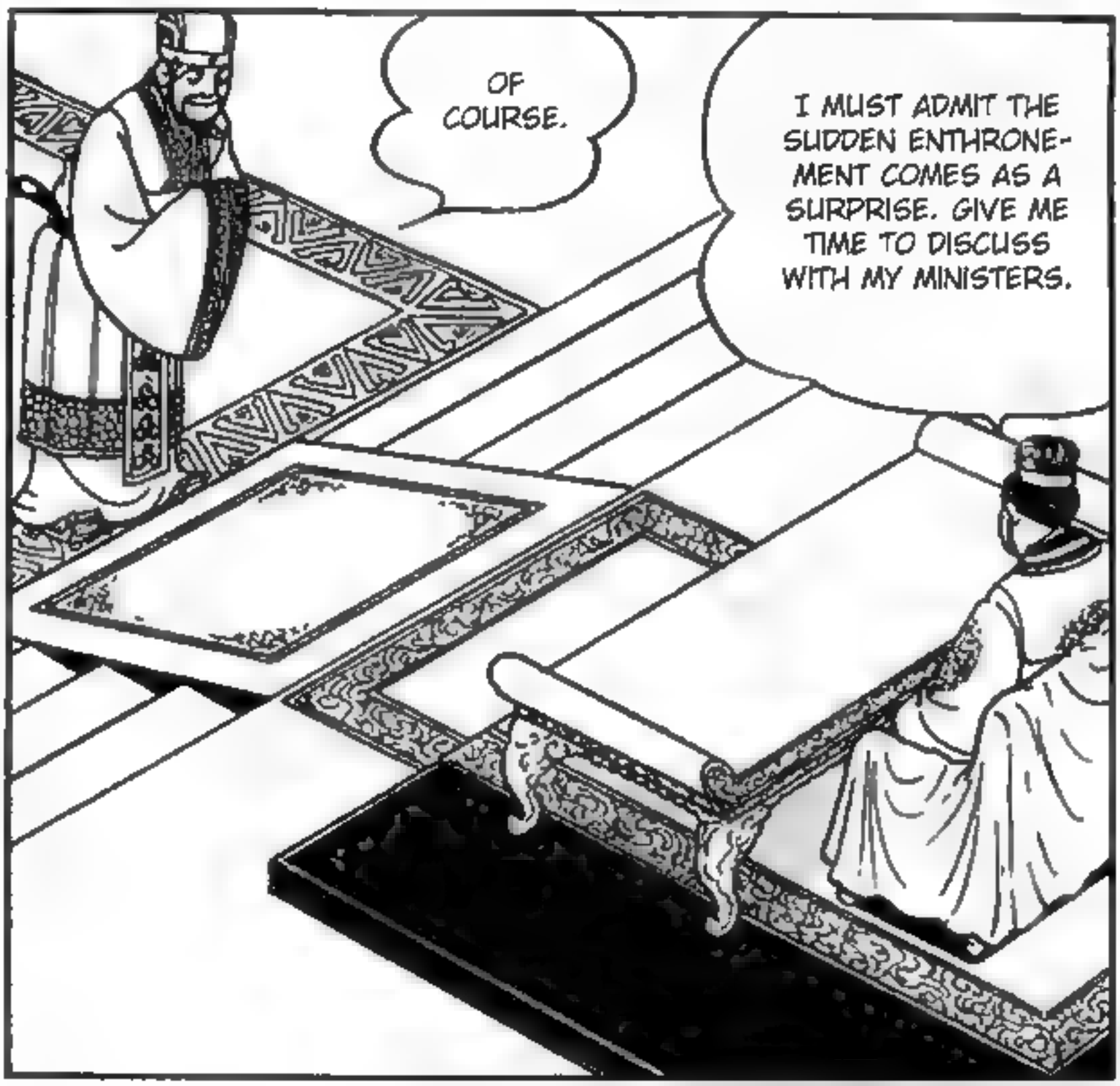
NATURALLY, HE SENT AN ENVOY TO SHU TO ANNOUNCE HIS ENTHRONEMENT.

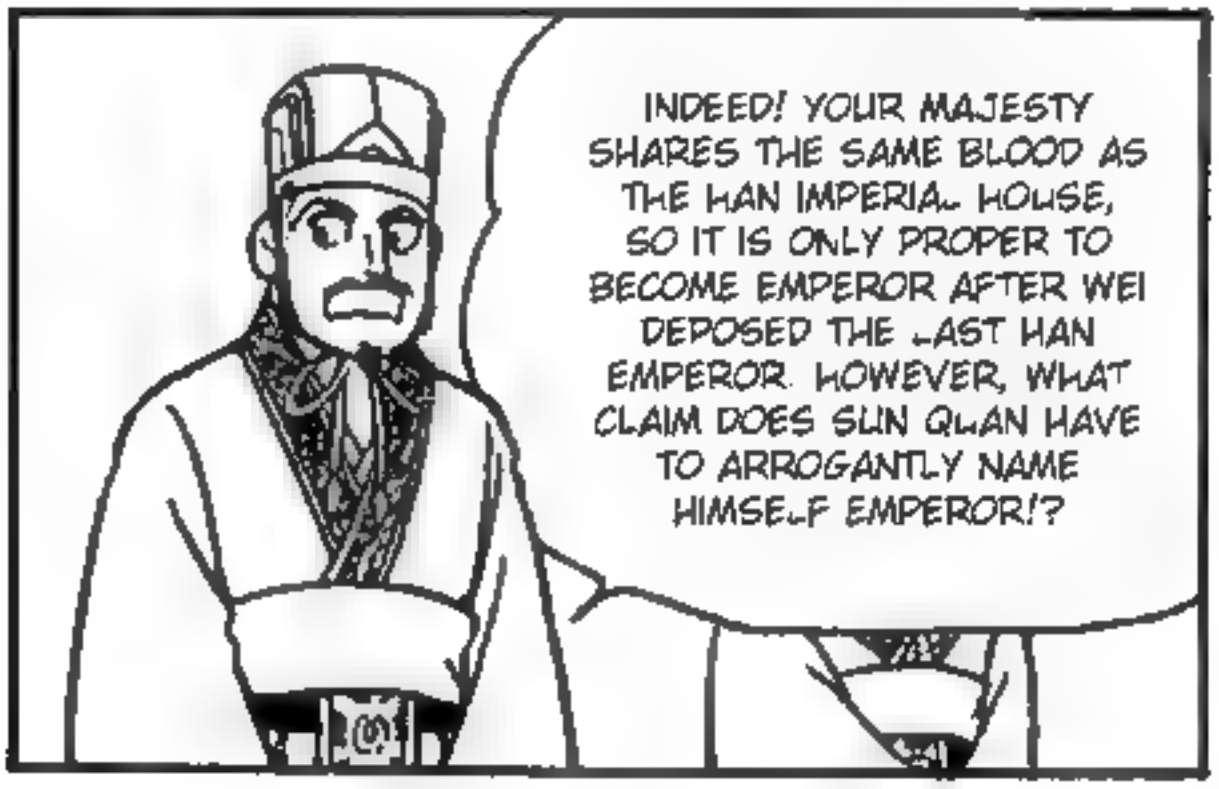
SUN QUAN HAS ASCENDED TO THE THRONE OF EMPEROR?

YES, SIR.

HMM...


MY EMPEROR WISHES THAT OUR TWO STATES CAN CONTINUE TO COOPERATE TOWARDS THE CONQUEST OF WEI AND DIVIDE THE REALM EQUALLY.


OF COURSE.
I MUST ADMIT THE SUDDEN ENTHRONE-MENT COMES AS A SURPRISE. GIVE ME TIME TO DISCUSS WITH MY MINISTERS.


INDEED! YOUR MAJESTY SHARES THE SAME BLOOD AS THE HAN IMPERIAL HOUSE, SO IT IS ONLY PROPER TO BECOME EMPEROR AFTER WEI DEPOSED THE LAST HAN EMPEROR. HOWEVER, WHAT CLAIM DOES SUN QUAN HAVE TO ARROGANTLY NAME HIMSELF EMPEROR!?

WE MUST NOT RECOGNIZE SUN QUAN'S ENTHRONE-MENT!

YES, AND IF THE PURPOSE OF OUR STATE IS TO RESTORE THE HAN, THEN HOW CAN WE RECOGNIZE ANOTHER MAN CLAIMING HIMSELF AS A NEW EMPEROR?

WE FIGHT THE WEI BECAUSE THEY ARE REBELS TO THE HOUSE OF HAN!

YES, OF COURSE.

CALM DOWN, GENTLEMEN. WE MUST CONSULT WITH KONGMING ON SUCH AN IMPORTANT ISSUE OF FOREIGN POLICY.

CHEN ZHEN.

GO TO HANZHONG AND ASK KONGMING FOR HIS OPINION ON SUN QUAN'S ENTHRONEMENT.

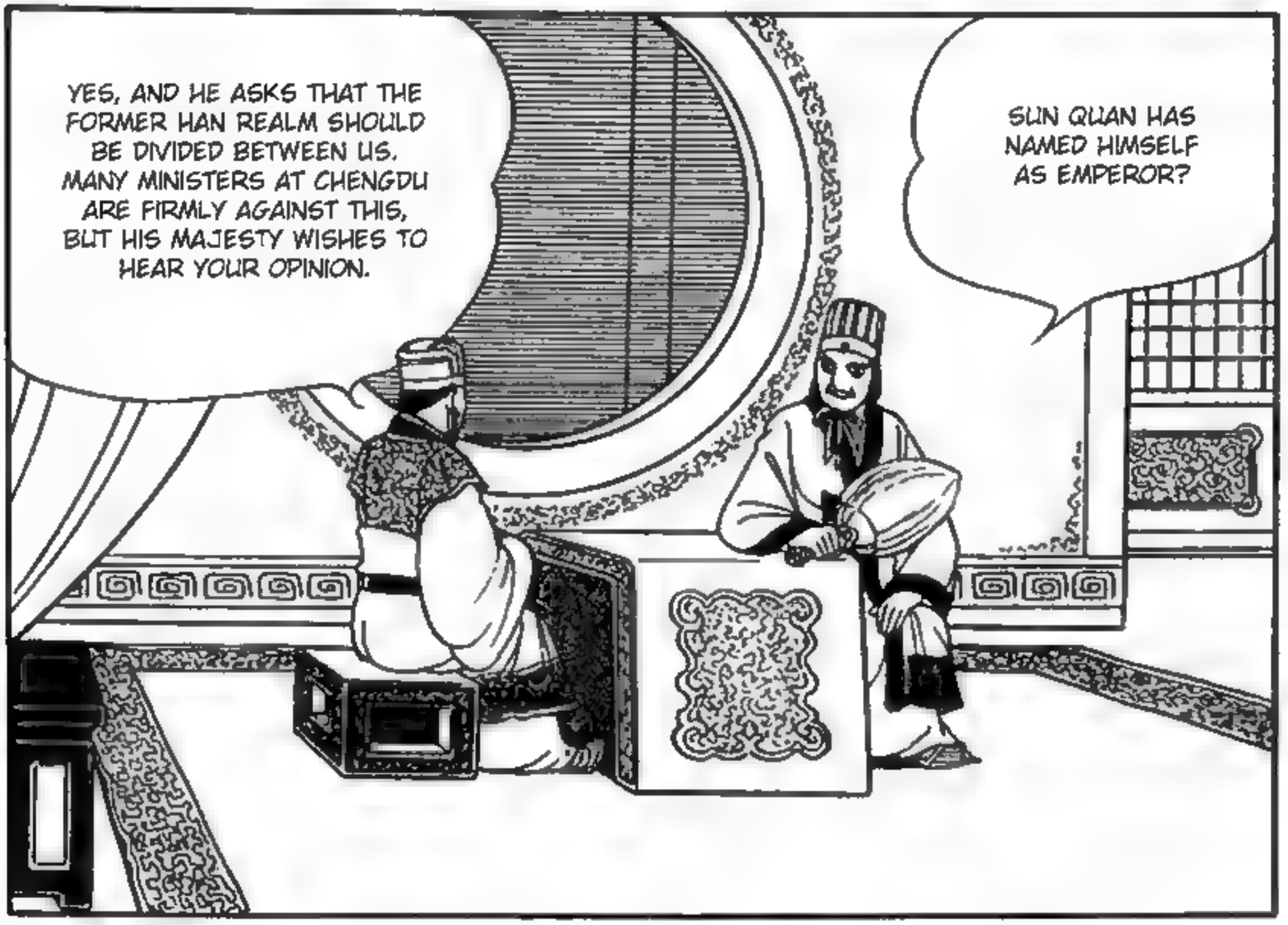
YES?

THANK YOU.

RIGHT AWAY, YOUR MAJESTY.

THE GRAND COMMAN-DANT CHEN ZHEN THUS RODE FOR HANZHONG

HANZHONG


YES, AND HE ASKS THAT THE FORMER HAN REALM SHOULD BE DIVIDED BETWEEN US. MANY MINISTERS AT CHENGDU ARE FIRMLY AGAINST THIS, BUT HIS MAJESTY WISHES TO HEAR YOUR OPINION.
SUN QUAN HAS NAMED HIMSELF AS EMPEROR?

IT IS REGRET-TABLE, BUT WE SHOULD GIVE FORMAL RECOGNITION.

HM...

YES, IDEALLY.

AS THE GENERAL OF THE RIGHT, ARE YOU NOT ONE OF THE STRONG-EST SUPPORTERS OF RESTORING THE HAN UNDER ONE EMPEROR AND ONE EMPIRE?

I BEG YOUR PARDON?

WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN THEN? HOW MUCH USE WILL OUR IDEALS BE WHEN OUR STATE IS CONQUERED?

BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO SQUABBLE OVER MERE FORMALITIES. WU IS A POWERFUL STATE IN ITS OWN RIGHT, AND TO DENY SUN QUAN FORMAL RECOGNITION OF HIS NEW TITLE IS TO DISMANTLE OUR ALLIANCE AND PUSH HIM TO WEI'S ARMS.

YES, SIR.

WE MUST MAKE NECESSARY CONCESSIONS TO MAINTAIN OUR RELATIONSHIP. TELL OUR EMPEROR THAT WE MUST SEND AN ENVOY WITH APPROPRIATE GIFTS TO CONGRATULATE SUN QUAN'S ENTHRONEMENT.

YES, OTHERWISE THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY WE WILL SEE A WEI-WU ALLIANCE.
KONGMING STRONGLY SUGGESTED I RECOGNIZE SUN QUAN'S NEW TITLE?

VERY WELL, I WILL RECOGNIZE THE NEW WU EMPEROR AND MAINTAIN OUR ALLIANCE.

HMM... THAT CERTAINLY WON'T DO.

CHANG'AN!?

THAT WAY, WEI WILL SEND SIMA YI TO DEFEND THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER, GIVING OUR FORCES A BETTER CHANCE TO TAKE QISHAN HILLS AND, ULTIMATELY, CHANG'AN.

THE GENERAL OF THE RIGHT ALSO URGES WE ASK WU TO SEND AN ARMY LED BY LU XUN TO ATTACK WEI LANDS.

AH, SO THAT'S WHAT KONGMING IS PLANNING!

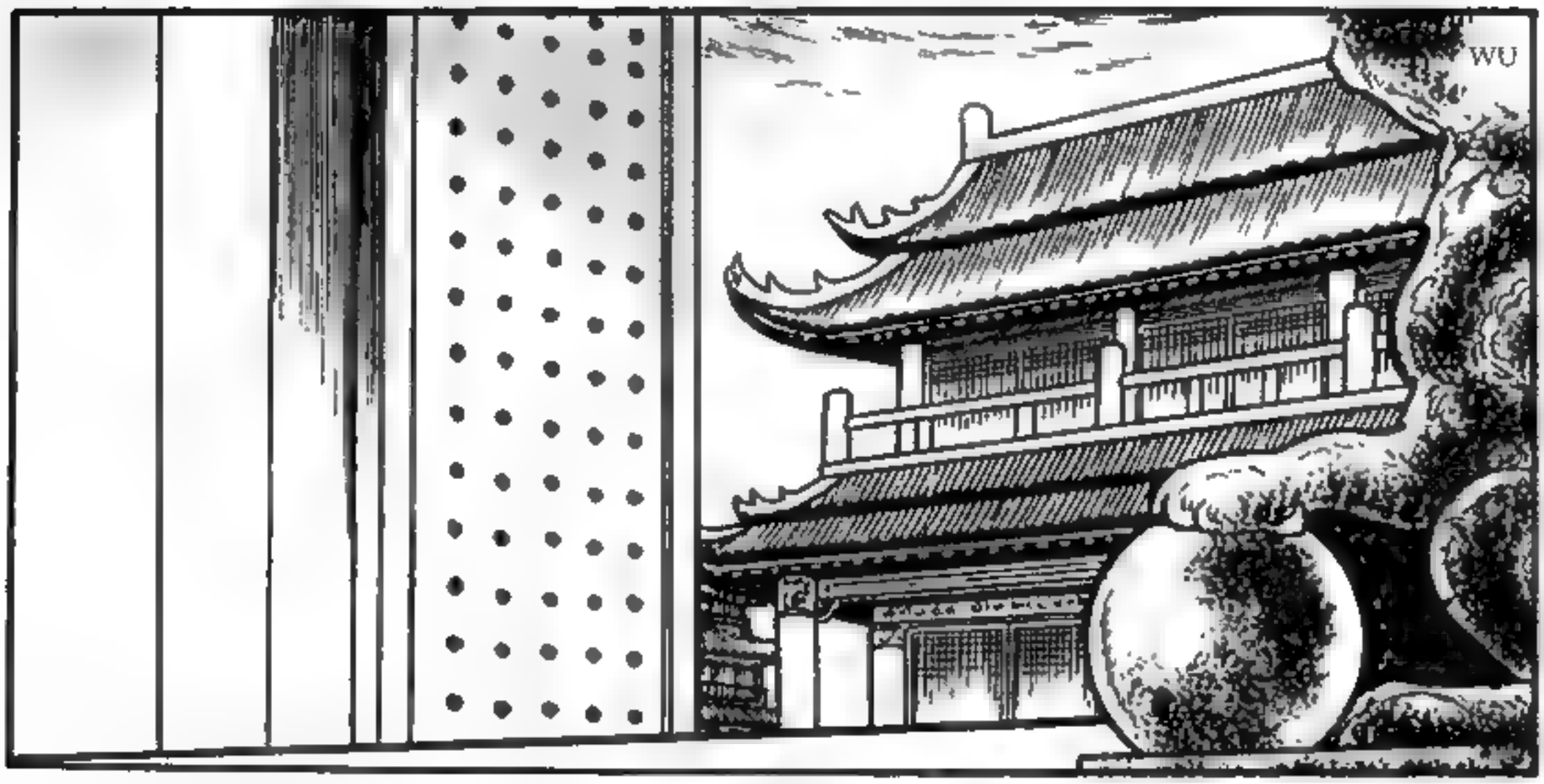
YES, ONCE CHANG'AN IS TAKEN, WE CAN STORM IN ON THE WEI CAPITAL AND FINISH OUR CONQUEST.

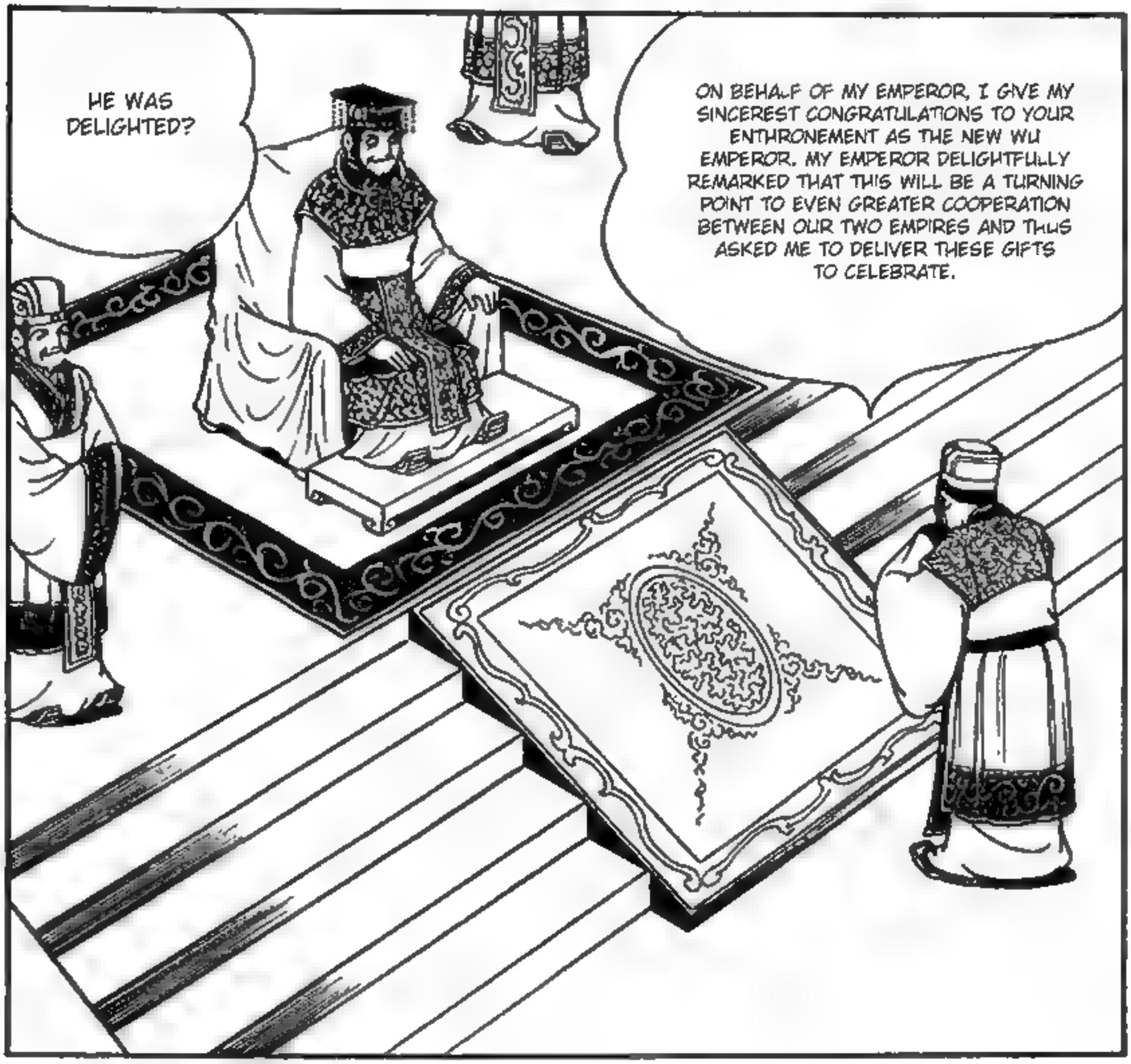
YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

CHEN ZHEN, PLEASE GO ON MY BEHALF TO CONGRATULATE THE NEW WU EMPEROR.

HEADING CARTS OF VALUABLES TO PRESENT AS GIFTS.

CHEN ZHEN QUICKLY HEADED FOR WU


WU

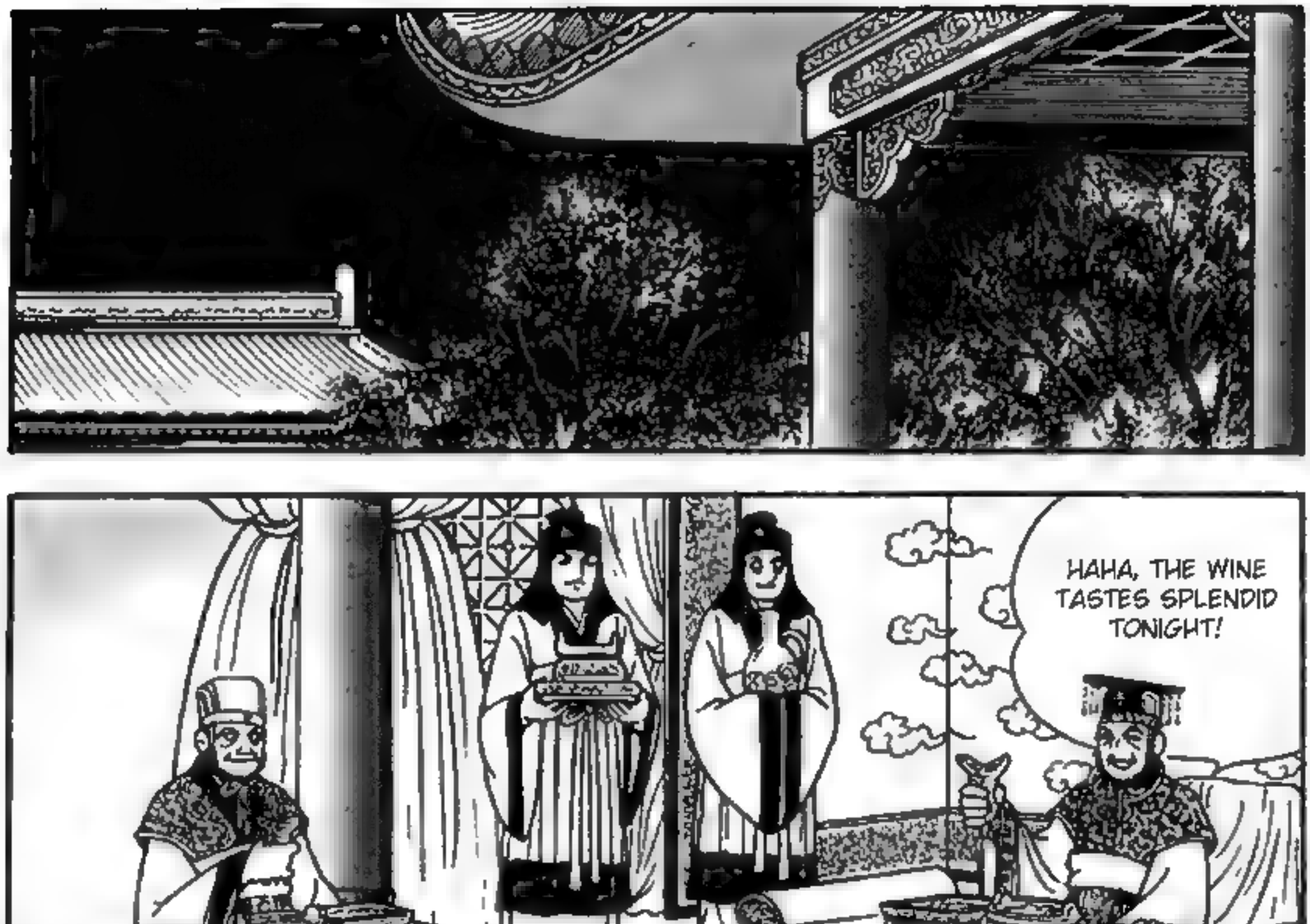

HE WAS DELIGHTED?
ON BEHALF OF MY EMPEROR, I GIVE MY SINCEREST CONGRATULATIONS TO YOUR ENTHRONEMENT AS THE NEW WU EMPEROR. MY EMPEROR DELIGHTFULLY REMARKED THAT THIS WILL BE A TURNING POINT TO EVEN GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN OUR TWO EMPIRES AND THUS ASKED ME TO DELIVER THESE GIFTS TO CELEBRATE.

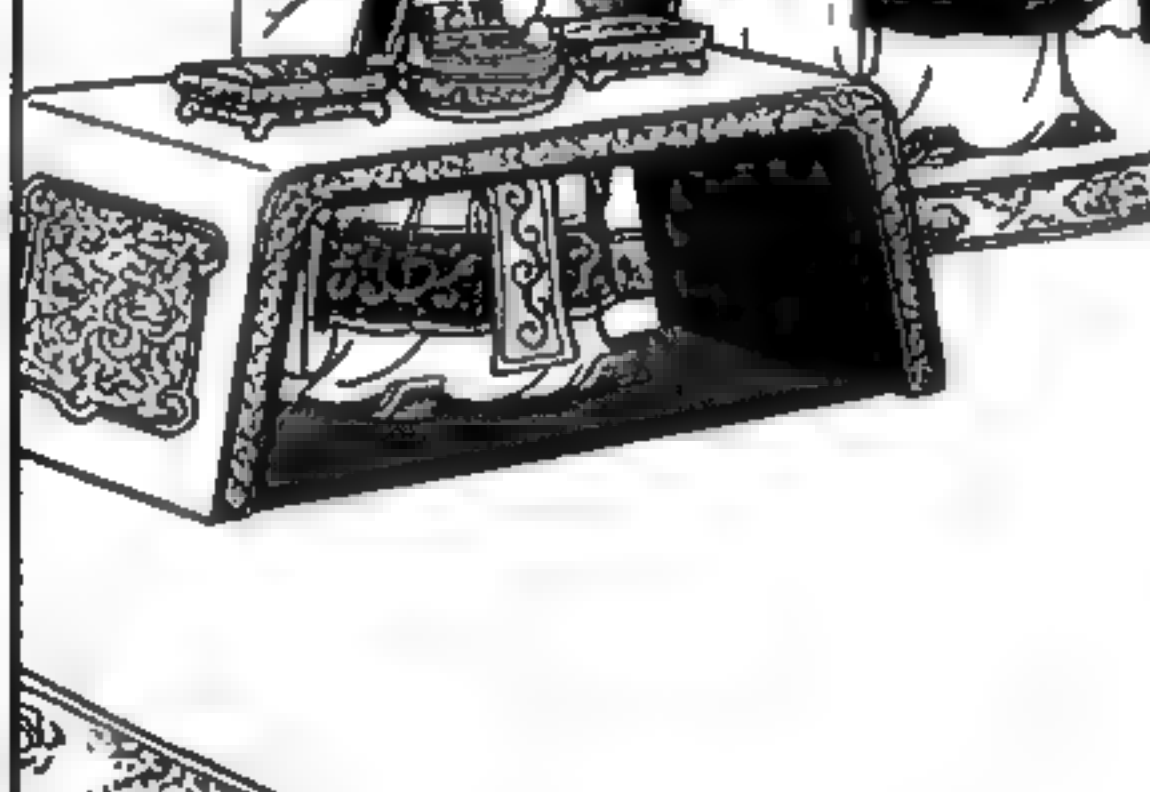
THESE ARE THE GIFTS MY EMPEROR PRESENTS.

TELL THE SHU EMPEROR THAT I GRATEFULLY ACCEPT.

HAHAHA!

LET US TREAT OUR HONOURED GUEST TO A LAVISH BANQUET!


HAHA, THE WINE TASTES SPLENDID TONIGHT!


I ASSURE YOUR DOUBTS ARE UNFOUNDED.

TO BE HONEST, CHEN ZHEN, I DID NOT THINK THE SHU EMPEROR WOULD SO EASILY GIVE FORMAL RECOGNITION TO MY ENTHRONEMENT.

HAHAHA!

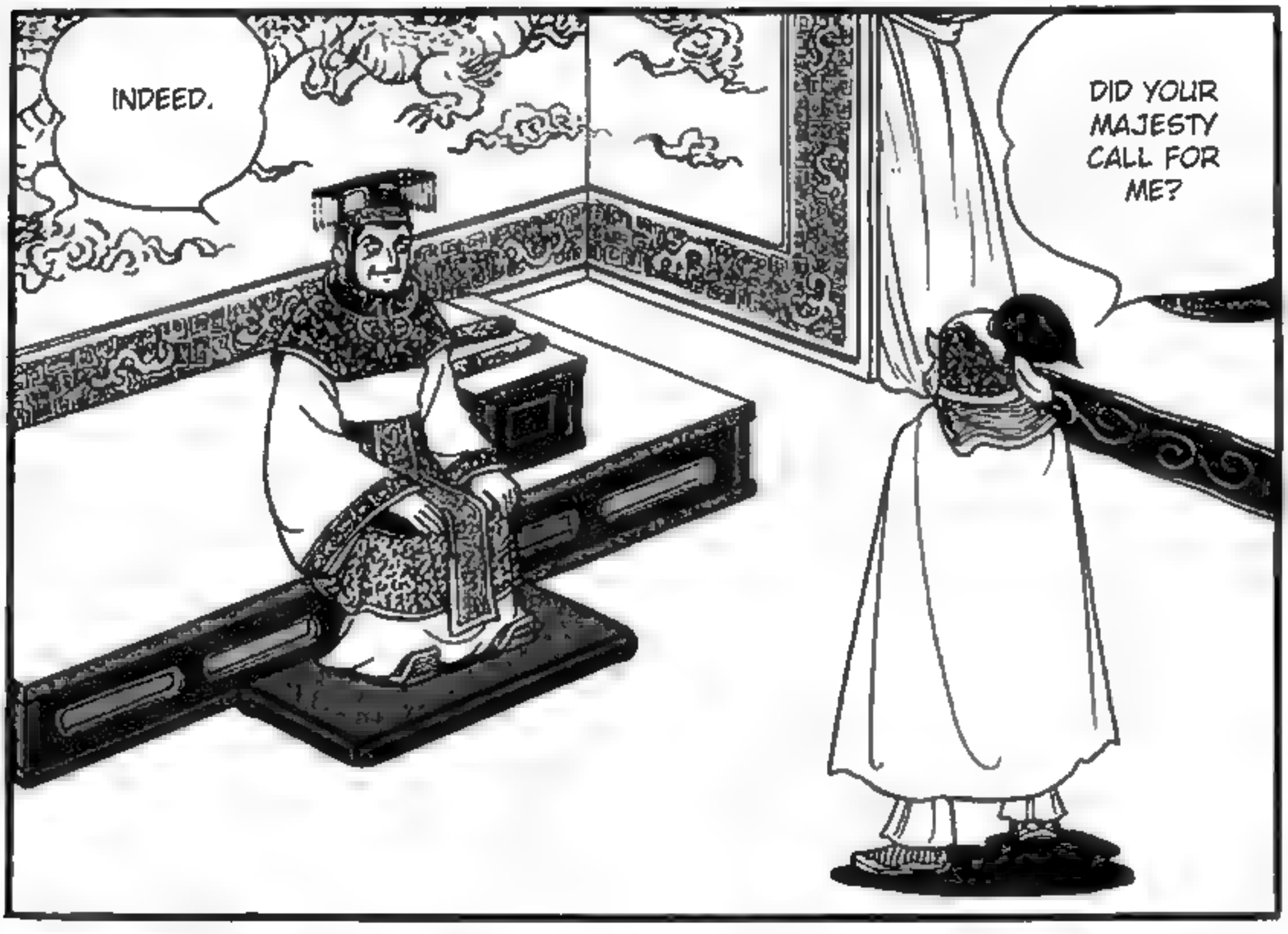
IT IS ONLY PROPER THAT THE RULER OF A POWERFUL STATE SUCH AS WU SHOULD BE TITLED AS EMPEROR.

YES, I INTEND TO UPHOLD THE TERMS OF OUR ALLIANCE.

SINCE WEI IS NOW FACING TWO STRONG EMPIRES, WE WILL SURELY SUCCEED IF WE DEVOTED OUR ARMIES TO ATTACKING WEI.

A WISE DECISION!

I WILL SUMMON LU XUN AT ONCE AND DISCUSS THE ISSUE WITH HIM.


INDEED.
DID YOUR MAJESTY CALL FOR ME?

WELL, I SUPPOSE WE MUST ACCEPT, IF THIS ALLIANCE IS TO CONTINUE.

THE SHU ENVOY REQUESTED WE CONTINUE OUR ATTACKS ON WEI, BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK?

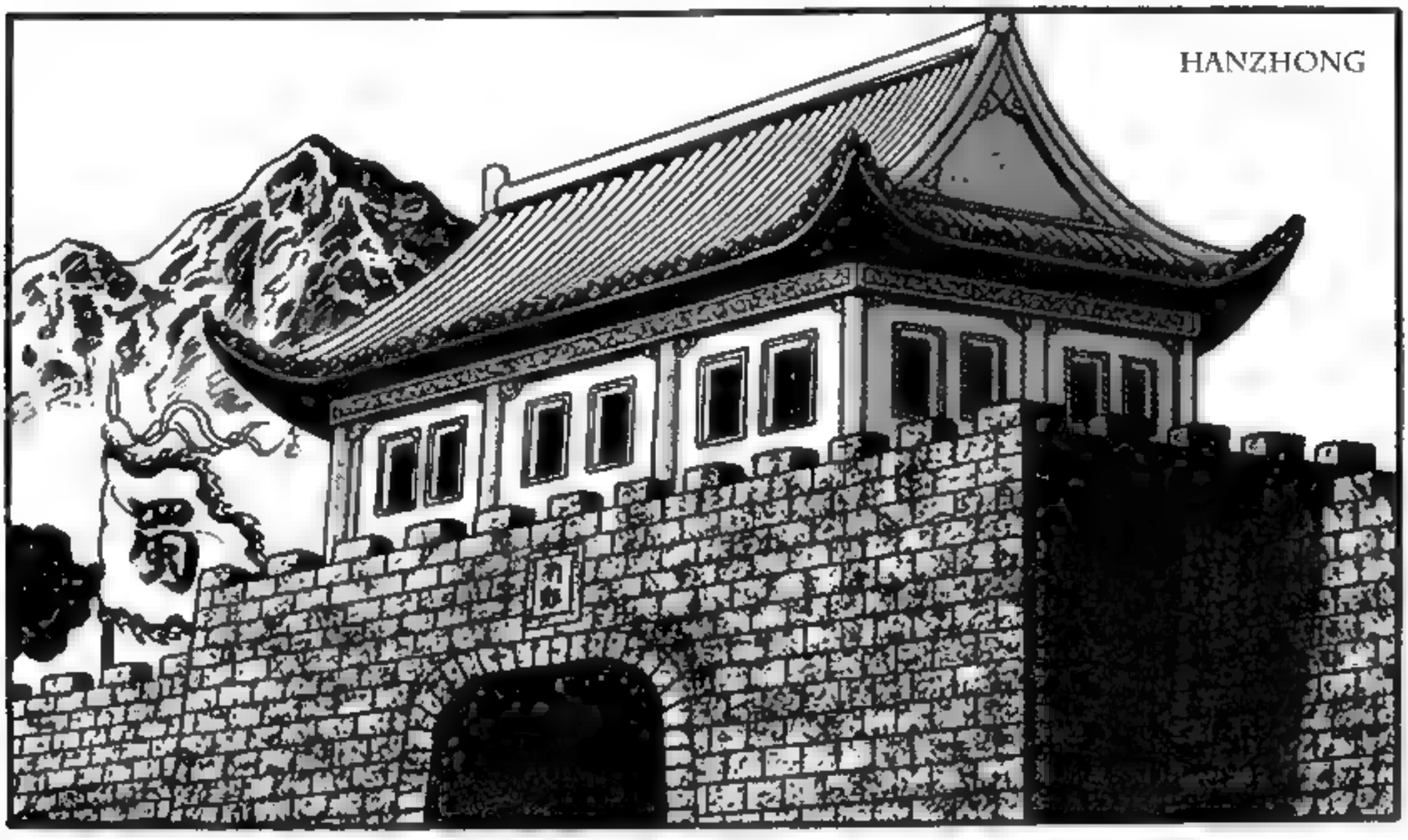
BUT WE MUST LET SHU DO MOST OF THE HEAVY LIFTING. OUR GOAL IS TO BEAT KONGMING TO THE WEI CAPITAL THE VERY MOMENT WE SEE AN OPENING.

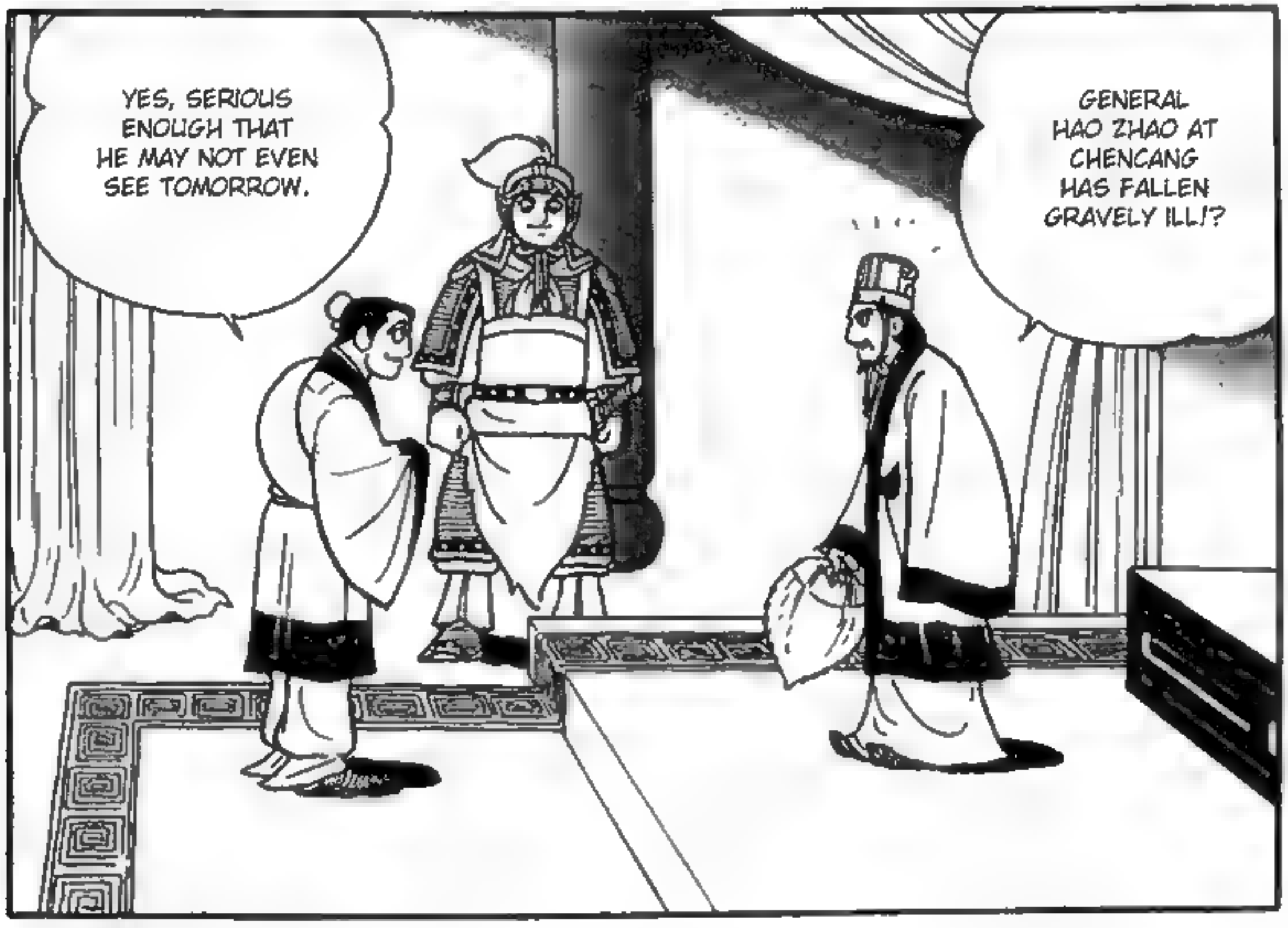
YES.

MINIMIZE OUR EFFORTS AND MAXIMIZE OUR PROFITS, I SEE.

GOOD, I WAS THINKING THE SAME MYSELF.

CAPTURE OF CHENCANG





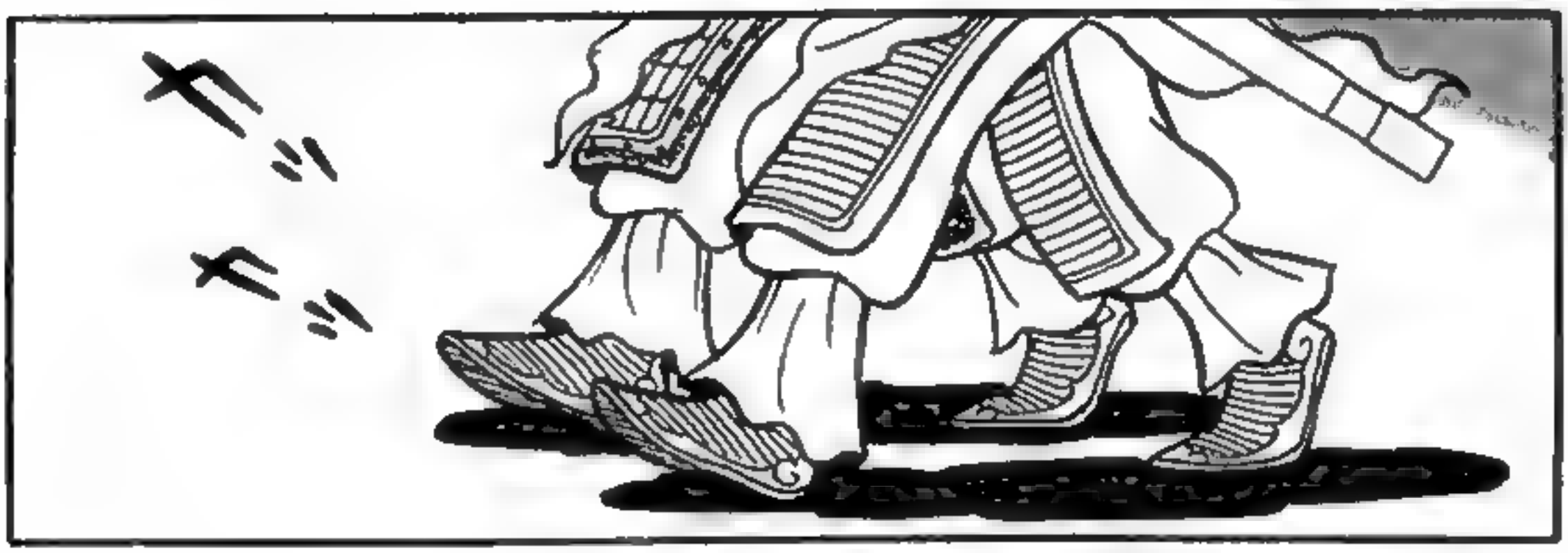
YES, HE AWAITS FURTHER ORDERS.

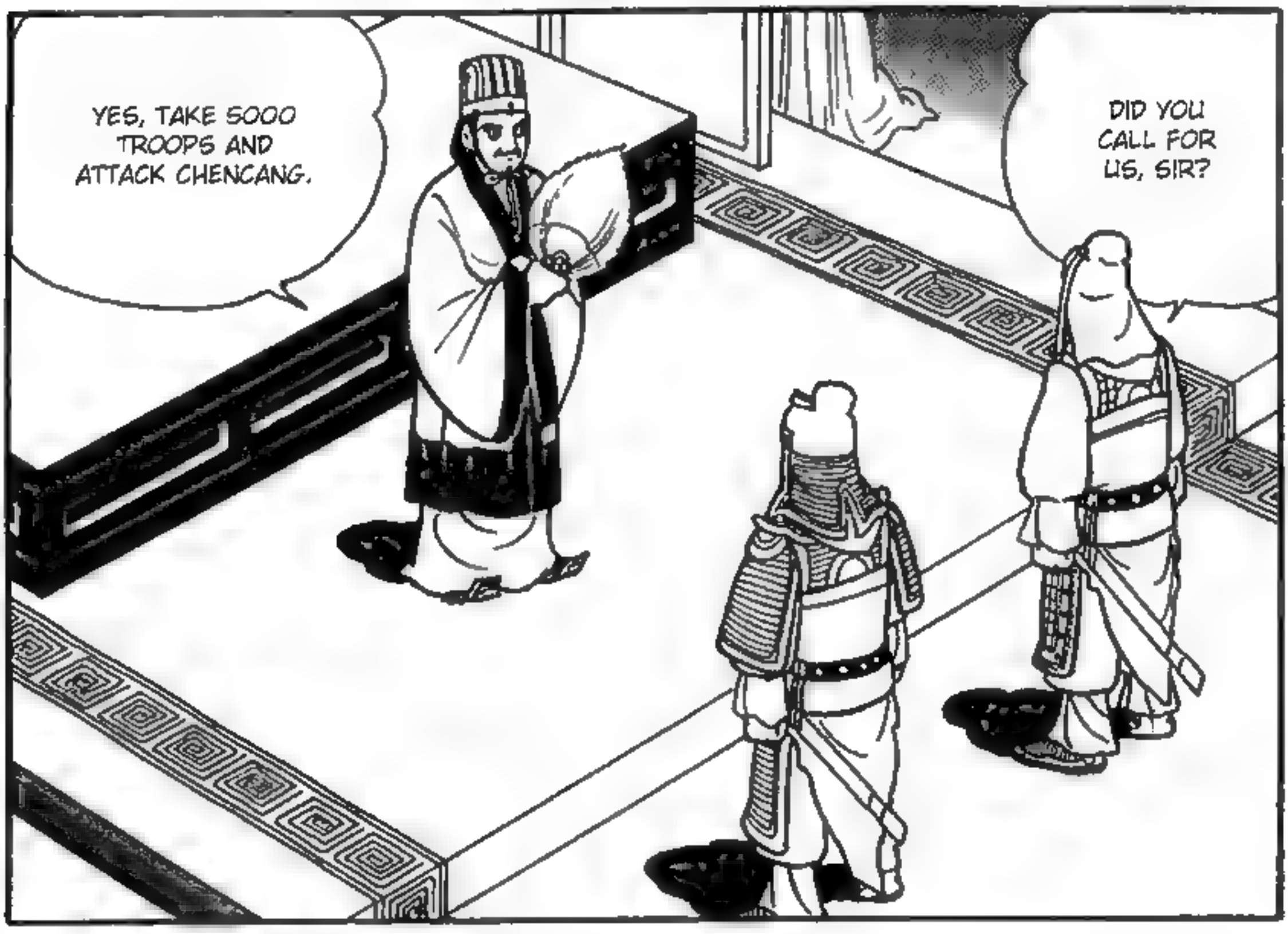
I ASSUME OUR SPY IS STILL SAFELY INSIDE, YES?

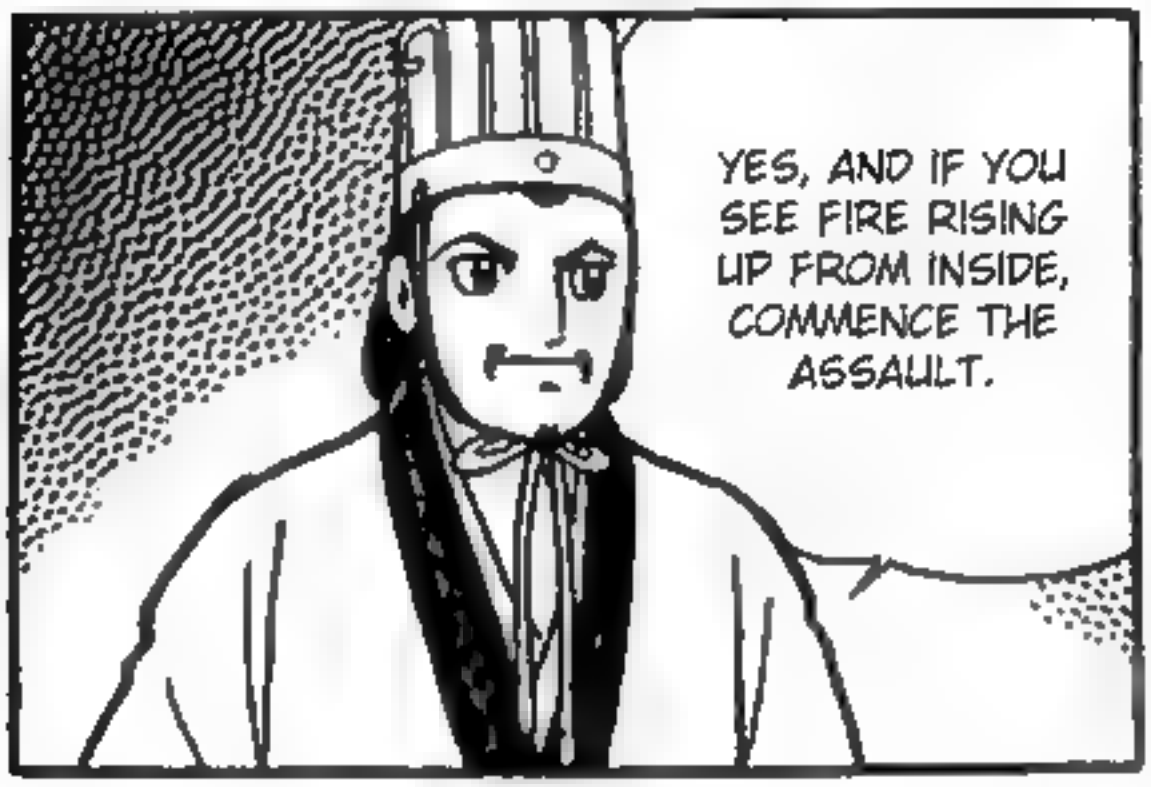
THEN THERE IS NO BETTER TIME TO CAPTURE CHENCANG.

YES, SIR.

CALL WEI YAN AND JIANG WEI AT ONCE.




YES, TAKE 5000 TROOPS AND ATTACK CHENCANG.
DID YOU CALL FOR US, SIR?


YES, AND IF YOU SEE FIRE RISING UP FROM INSIDE, COMMENCE THE ASSAULT.

WITH JUST 5000 TROOPS?
ATTACK CHENCANG?

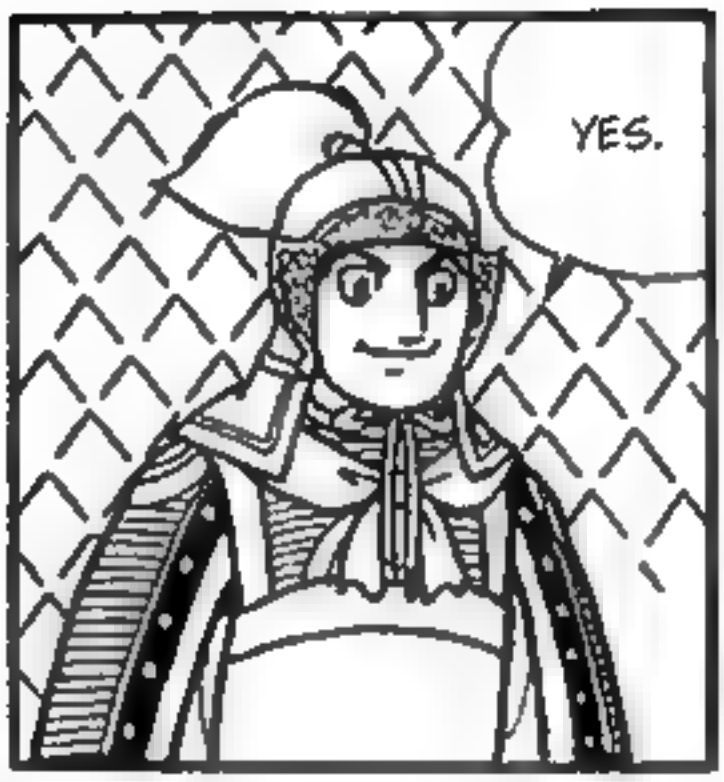
BE READY TO DEPART IN 3 DAYS.

AND WHEN SHOULD WE SET OUT?

YES, SIR.

WELL, ORDERS ARE ORDERS. OUR JOB IS TO CARRY IT OUT TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITIES.

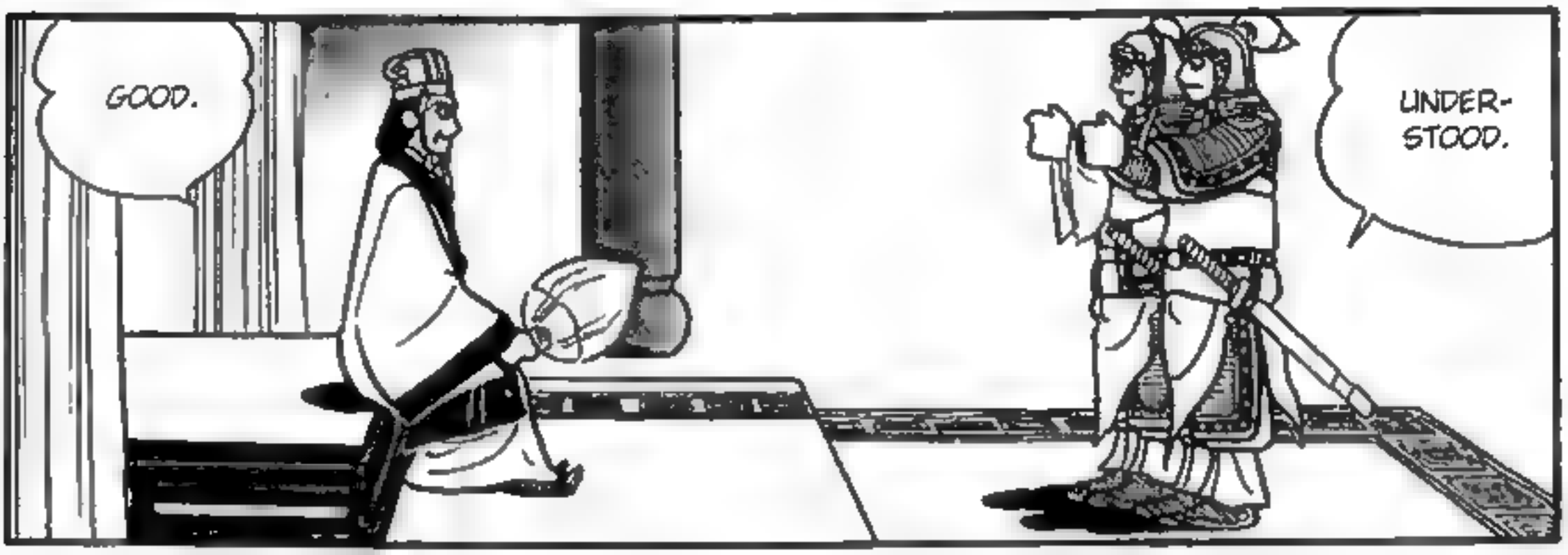
I'M HAVING TROUBLE COMPREHENDING THESE ORDERS. HOW DOES THE GENERAL OF THE RIGHT EXPECT US TO TAKE CHENCANG WITH JUST 5000 TROOPS WHEN OUR ENTIRE ARMY FAILED TO TAKE IT IN THE LAST CAMPAIGN?


YES.

GUAN XING, ZHANG BAO. COME CLOSER.

YES.

I WANT YOU TO... WHISPER WHISPER


GOOD.
UNDER-STOOD.

CHANG'AN

DID YOU CALL FOR ME?

NEWS OF HAO ZHAO S ILLNESS REACHED GUO HUAI AT CHANG'AN.

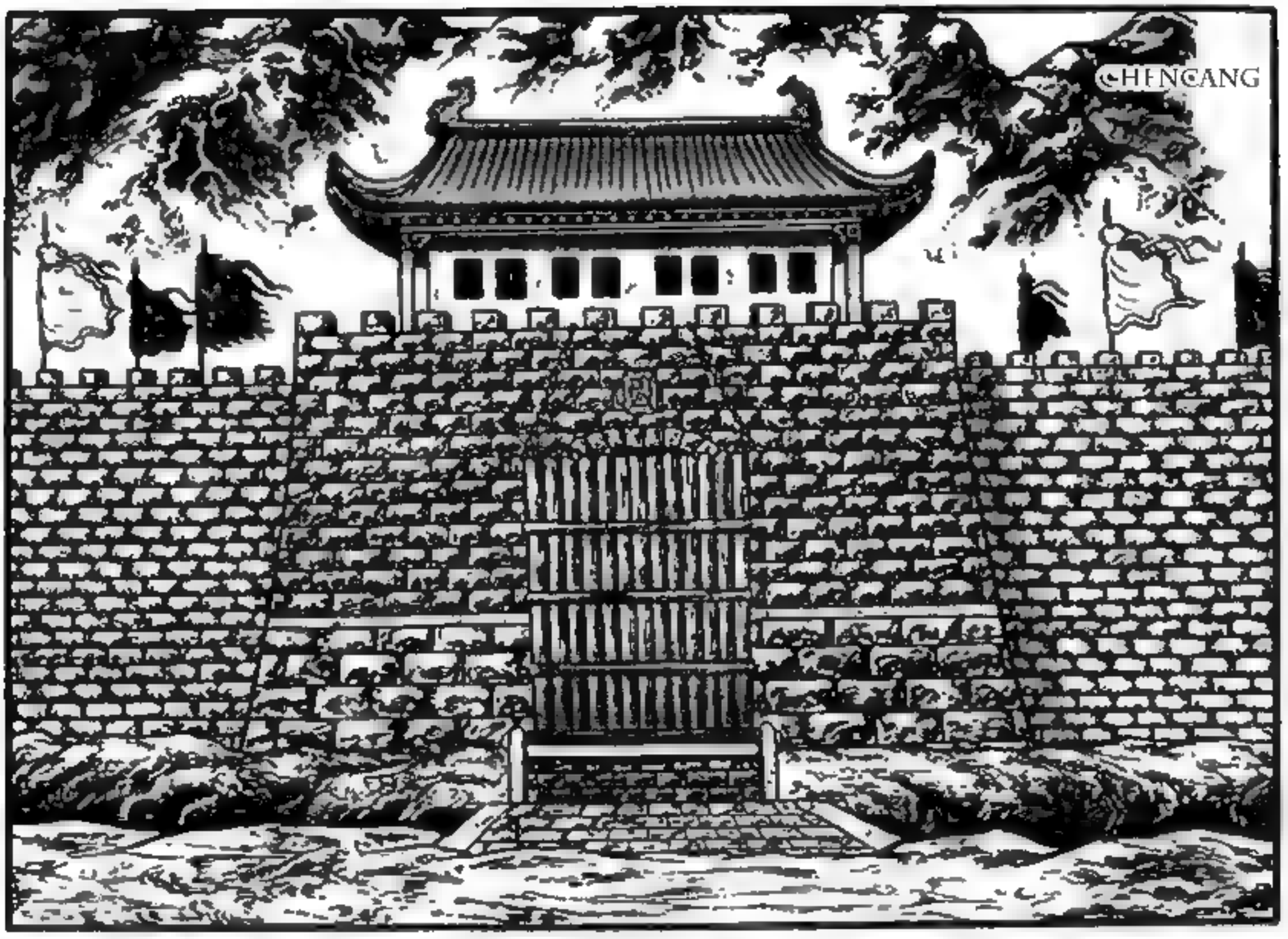
WHAT!?

YES, I'VE JUST RECEIVED WORD THAT HAO ZHAO IS VERY ILL AND MAY NOT LIVE MUCH LONGER.

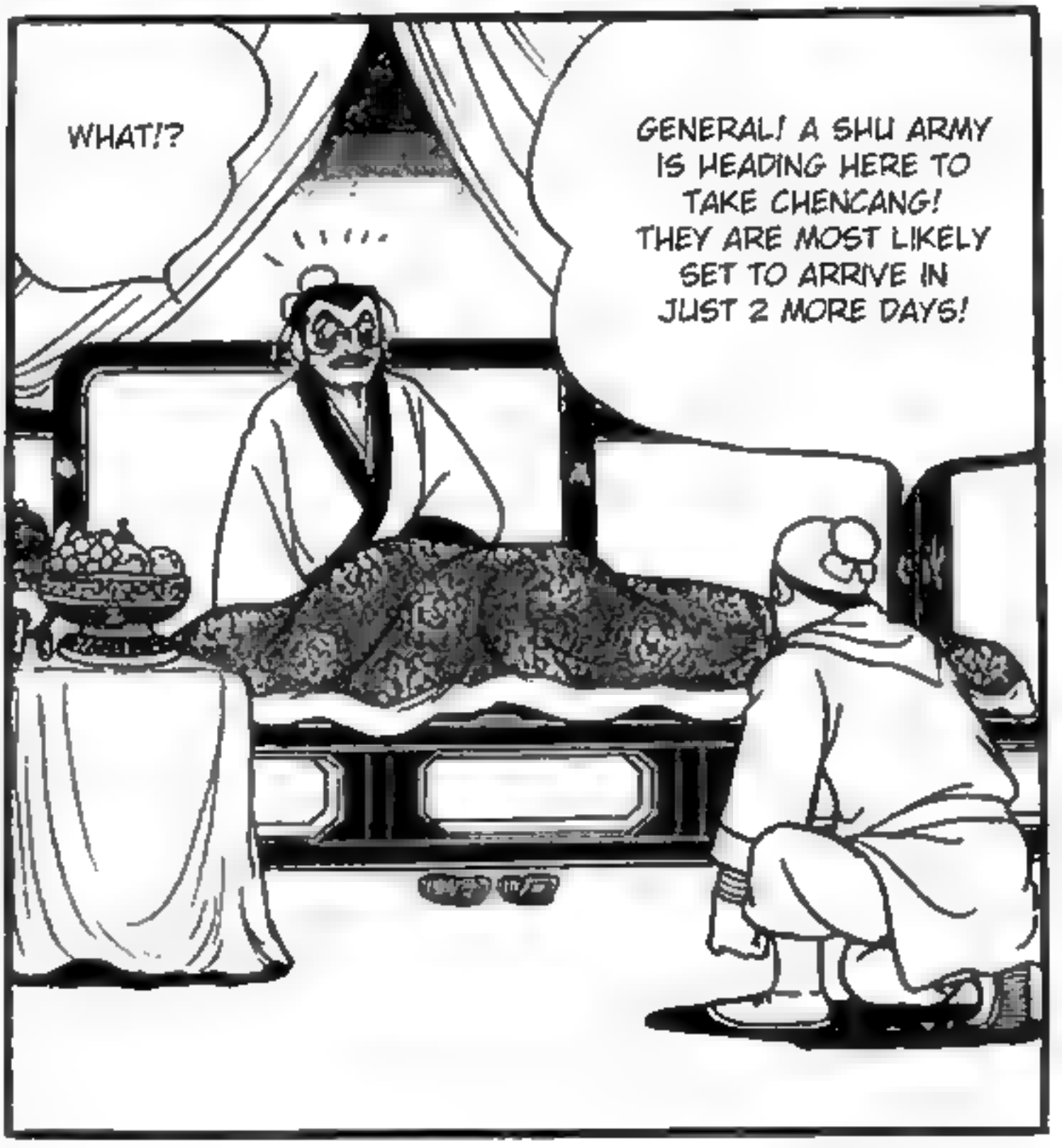
YES, OF COURSE. CHENCANG IS TOO IMPORTANT TO LOSE.

IF ZHUGE LIANG WERE TO FIND OUT, HE WILL NOT HESITATE TO CAPTURE CHENCANG AT ONCE. THUS, I NEED YOU TO LEAVE FOR CHENCANG RIGHT AWAY AND TAKE HAO ZHAO'S PLACE.

WITH 3000 TROOPS, ZHANG HE QUICKLY RODE FOR CHENCANG


CHENCANG

CURSES, ZHUGE LIANG MUST HAVE HEARD ABOUT MY CONDITION...


WHAT!?
GENERAL! A SHU ARMY IS HEADING HERE TO TAKE CHENCANG! THEY ARE MOST LIKELY SET TO ARRIVE IN JUST 2 MORE DAYS!

SOOO!? ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT MISSING AN EXTRA ZERO?

ONLY 5000, SIR.

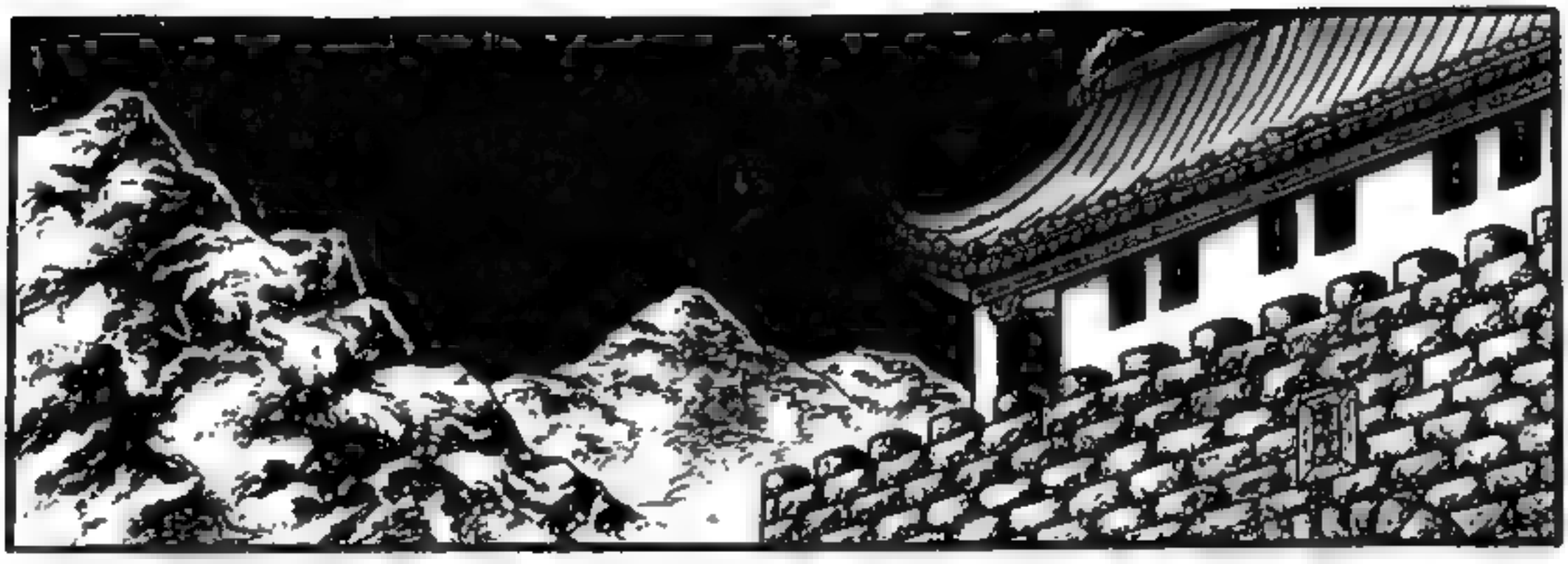
AND HOW MANY DO THEY NUMBER?

REPORTS SAY IT'S A 5000-STRONG FORCE LED BY WEI YAN AND JIANG WEI.

IN ANY CASE, IF IT'S ONLY 5000 ENEMIES, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DIRECT OUR DEFENSE EVEN FROM MY SICKBED.

WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE THE ENEMIES THINKING? DIDN'T I SHOW THEM LAST TIME THEY COULDN'T TAKE CHENCANG WITH EVEN THEIR ENTIRE ARMY?

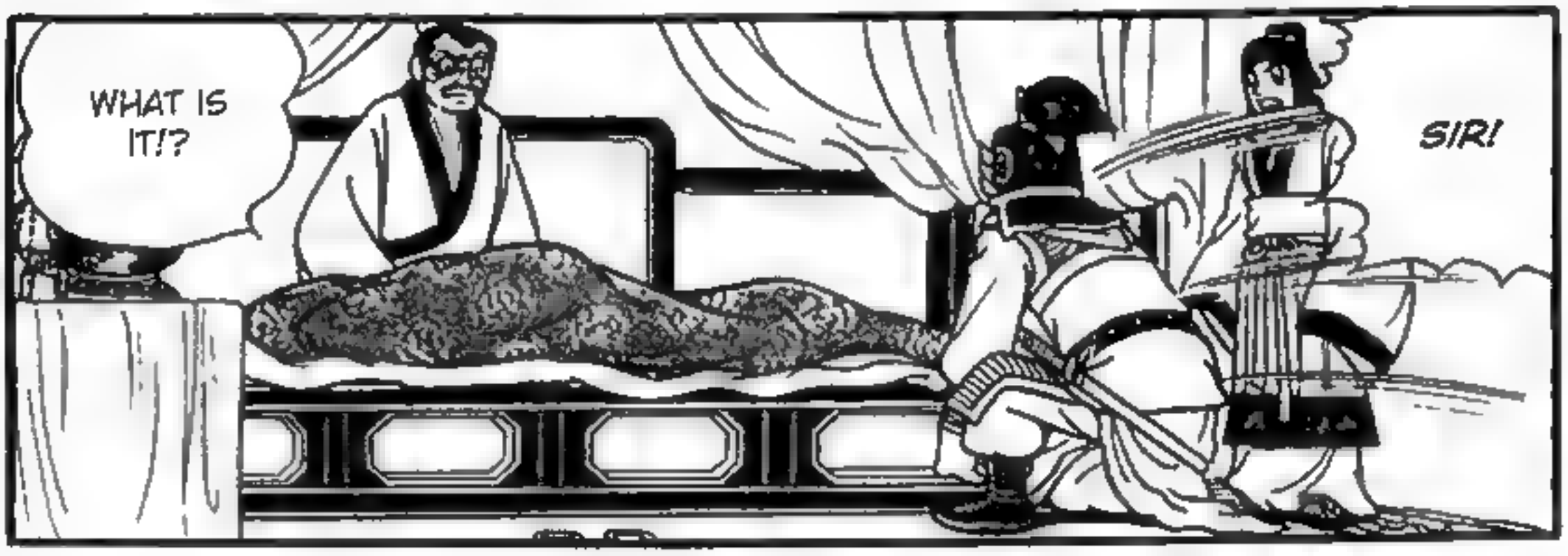
HAHA... COME IF YOU DARE, SHU. I'LL CRUSH YOU AGAIN.

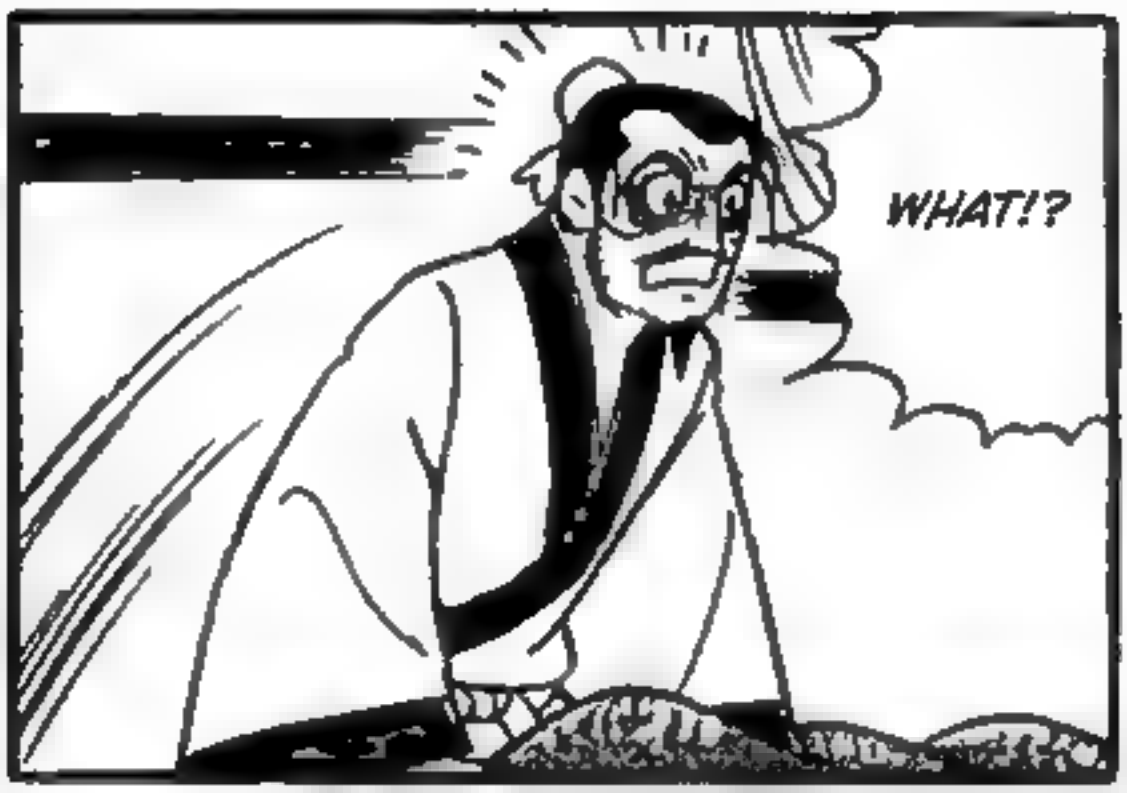


WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

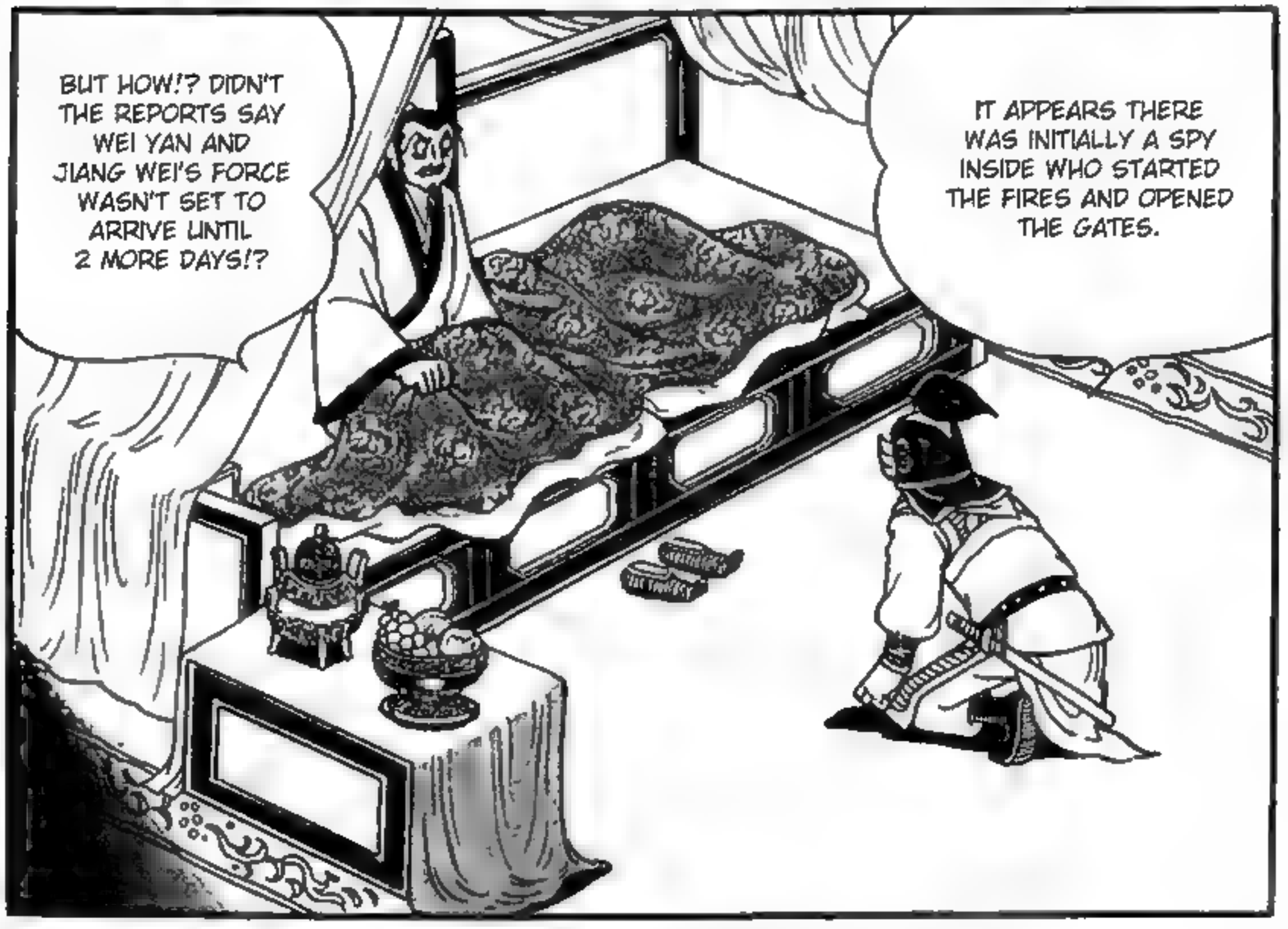
HM?

I WILL GO CHECK AT ONCE, SIR.


WHAT IS IT!?
SIR!

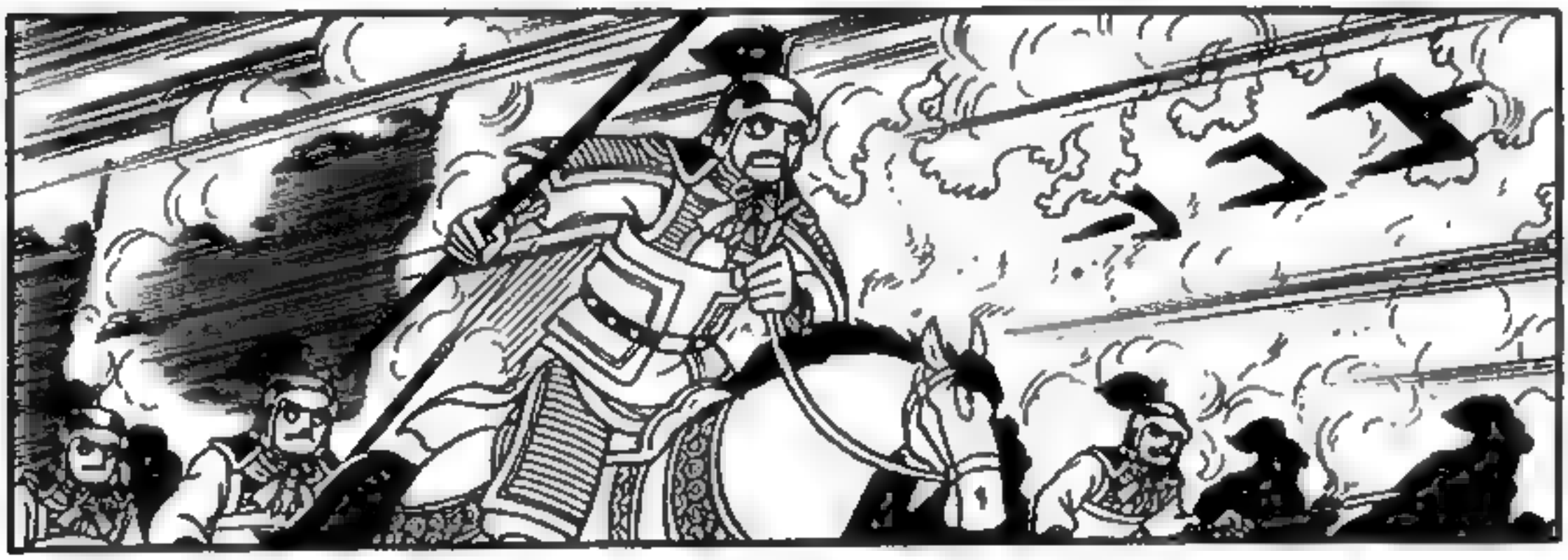

WHAT!?

ENEMY TROOPS ARE INSIDE, LIGHTING FIRE EVERYWHERE!


BUT HOW!? DIDN'T THE REPORTS SAY WEI YAN AND JIANG WEI'S FORCE WASN'T SET TO ARRIVE UNTIL 2 MORE DAYS!?
IT APPEARS THERE WAS INITIALLY A SPY INSIDE WHO STARTED THE FIRES AND OPENED THE GATES.

CURSES! SOMEONE HELP ME UP!
WE DON'T KNOW, SIR, BUT THERE ARE CLEARLY ENEMIES NOW INSIDE OUR WALLS.

AHH!



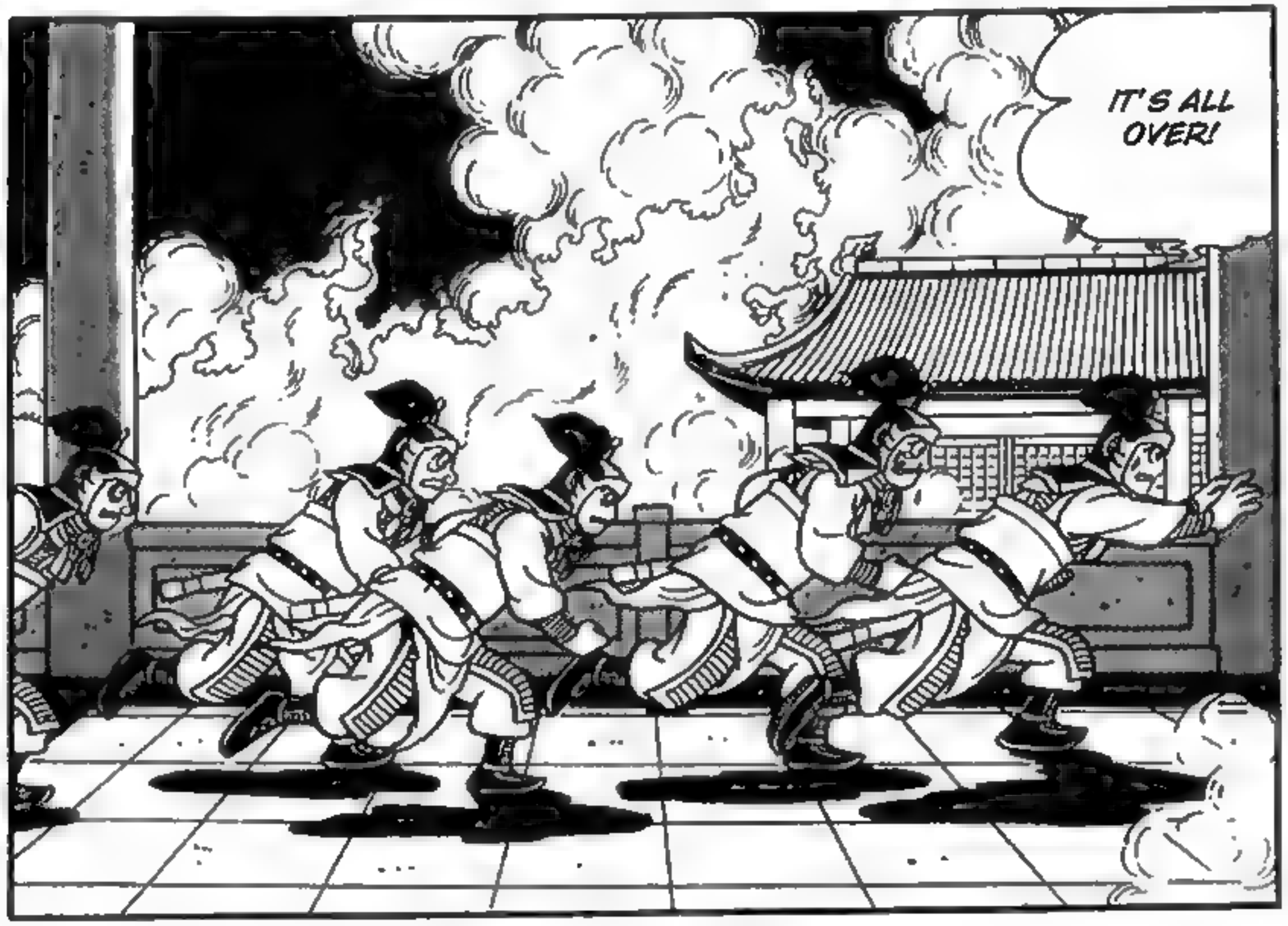
NGHH!

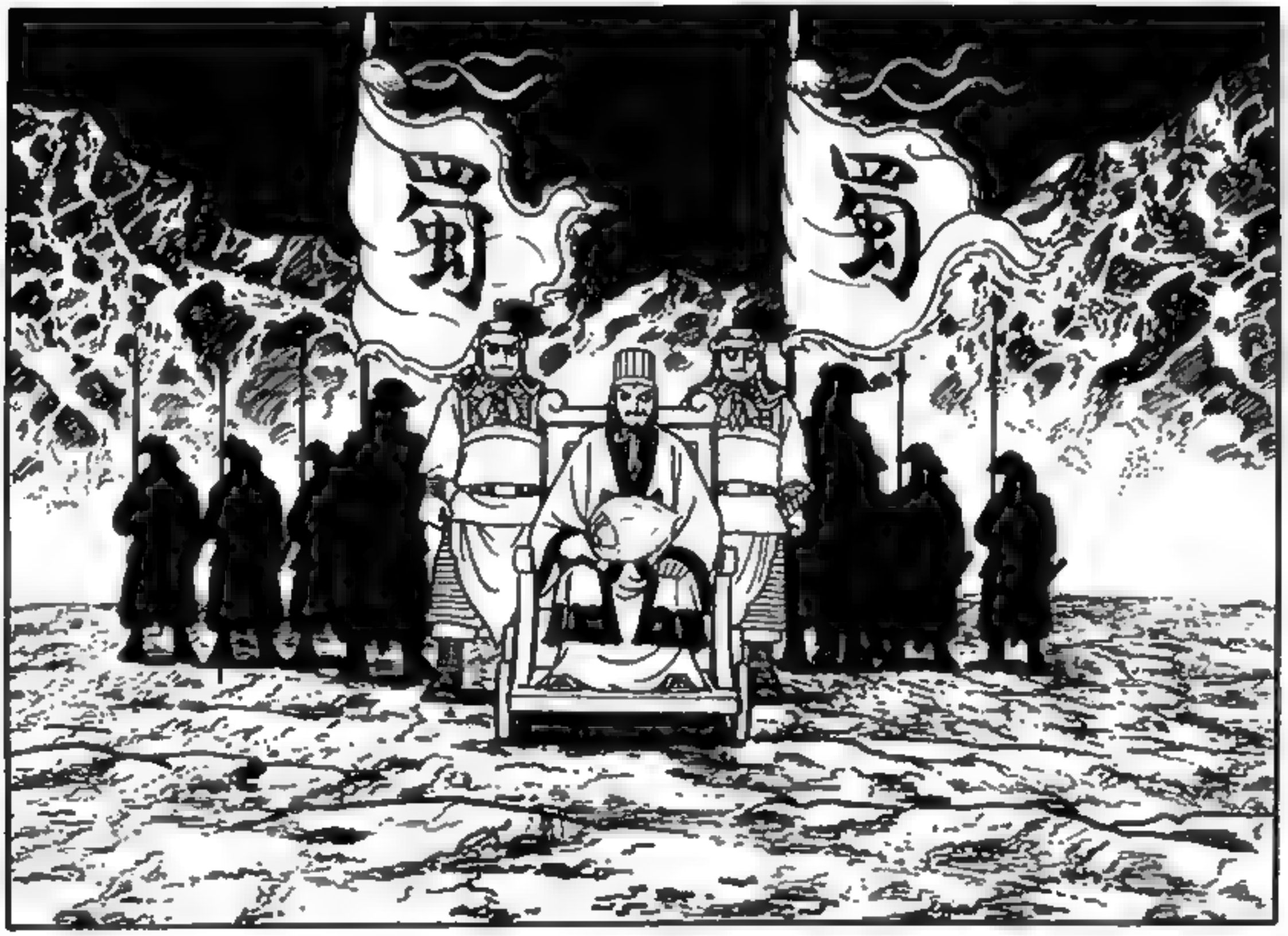
WHERE AND WHEN DID ALL THESE SHU TROOPS COME FROM!?

GAHHH!

SIR!
GENERAL HAO ZHAO!

HE'S NOT BREATH-ING!


IT'S ALL OVER!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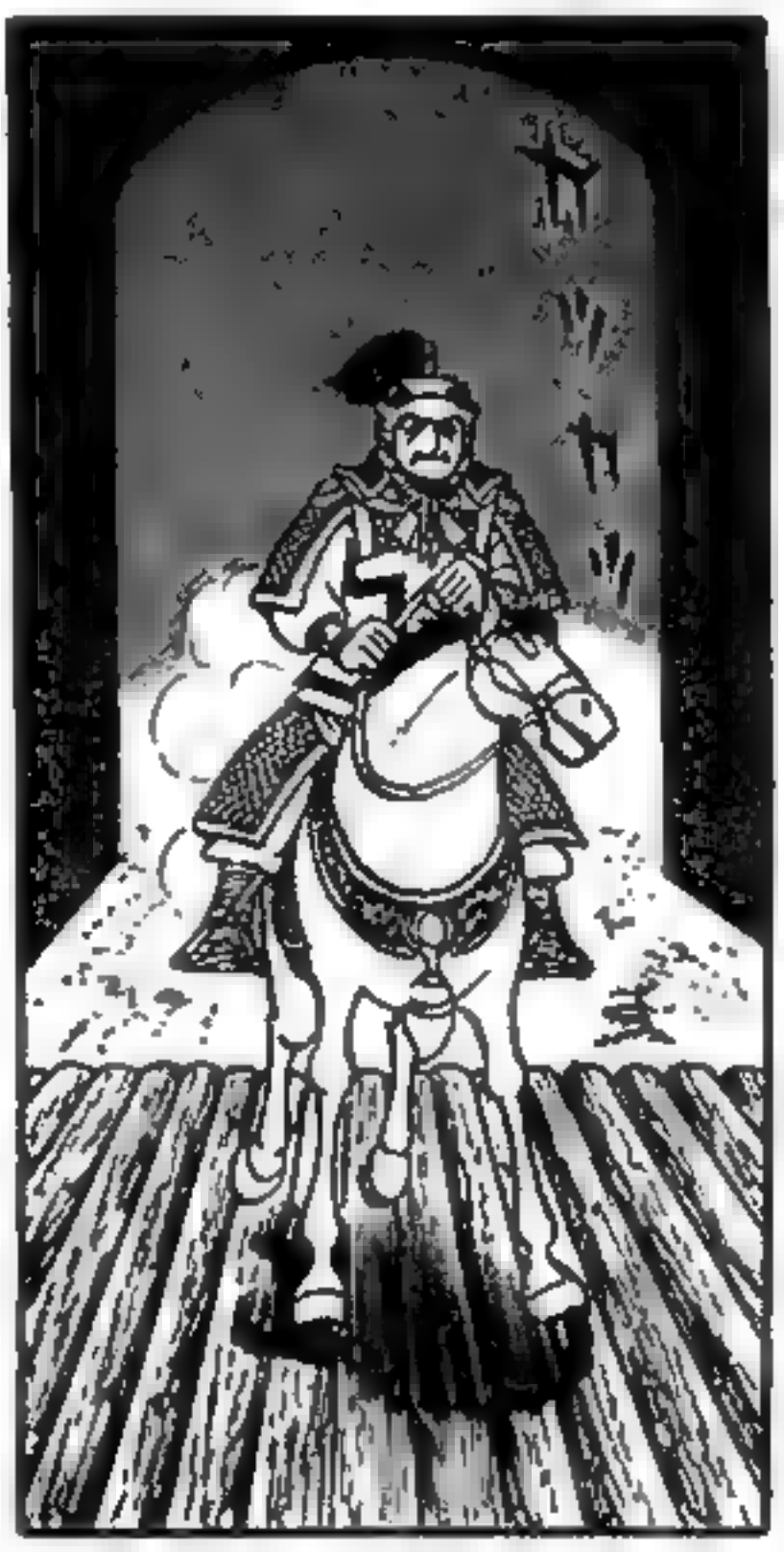


AND WHAT ABOUT HAO ZHAO?

HE SEEMS TO HAVE COUGHED UP BLOOD AND DIED.

WELL DONE.

THE REMAINING GARRISON HAVE FLED, SIR.

YES, SIR.

LEAD ME TO HIS BODY.

HE MAY HAVE BEEN OUR ENEMY, BUT HE WAS UPHOLDING HIS LOYALTY TO THE VERY END AND THUS DESERVES RESPECT. GIVE HIM A PROPER FUNERAL.

A REGRETTABLE DEATH OF A TALENTED MAN...

THIS IS THE FALLEN HAO ZHAO, SIR.

HM?
HM?

魏延

YES, SOMETHING IS DEFINITELY OFF.

姜維

SOMETHING SEEMS STRANGE WITH THE FORT, WEI YAN.

姜維

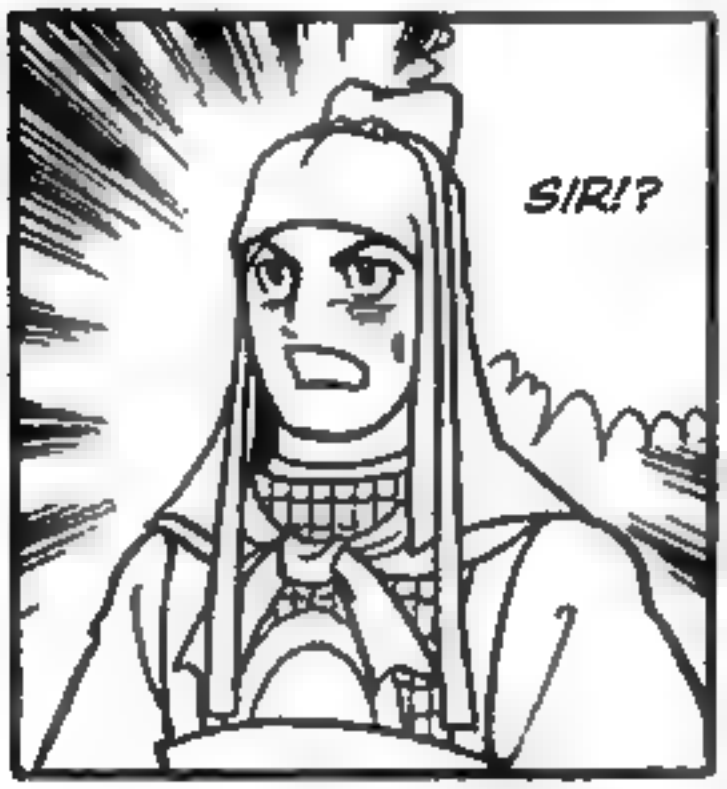
魏延

LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK.

YES.

WHA!

WEI YAN! JIANG WEI! AREN'T YOU RUNNING A LITTLE LATE?


SIR!?

R-RIGHT.

CHENCANG HAS ALREADY FALLEN. YOU MAY ENTER THE GATES WITHOUT WORRIES.

HAHAHA, YES OF COURSE, OF COURSE.

COULD YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED, SIR? WE'RE STILL QUITE BAFFLED.

THUS, WHEN THE SPIES REPORTED BACK TO HAO ZHAO, HE WOULD BE REASSURED BY THE LOW NUMBER OF TROOPS AND PLENTY OF TIME TO PREPARE.

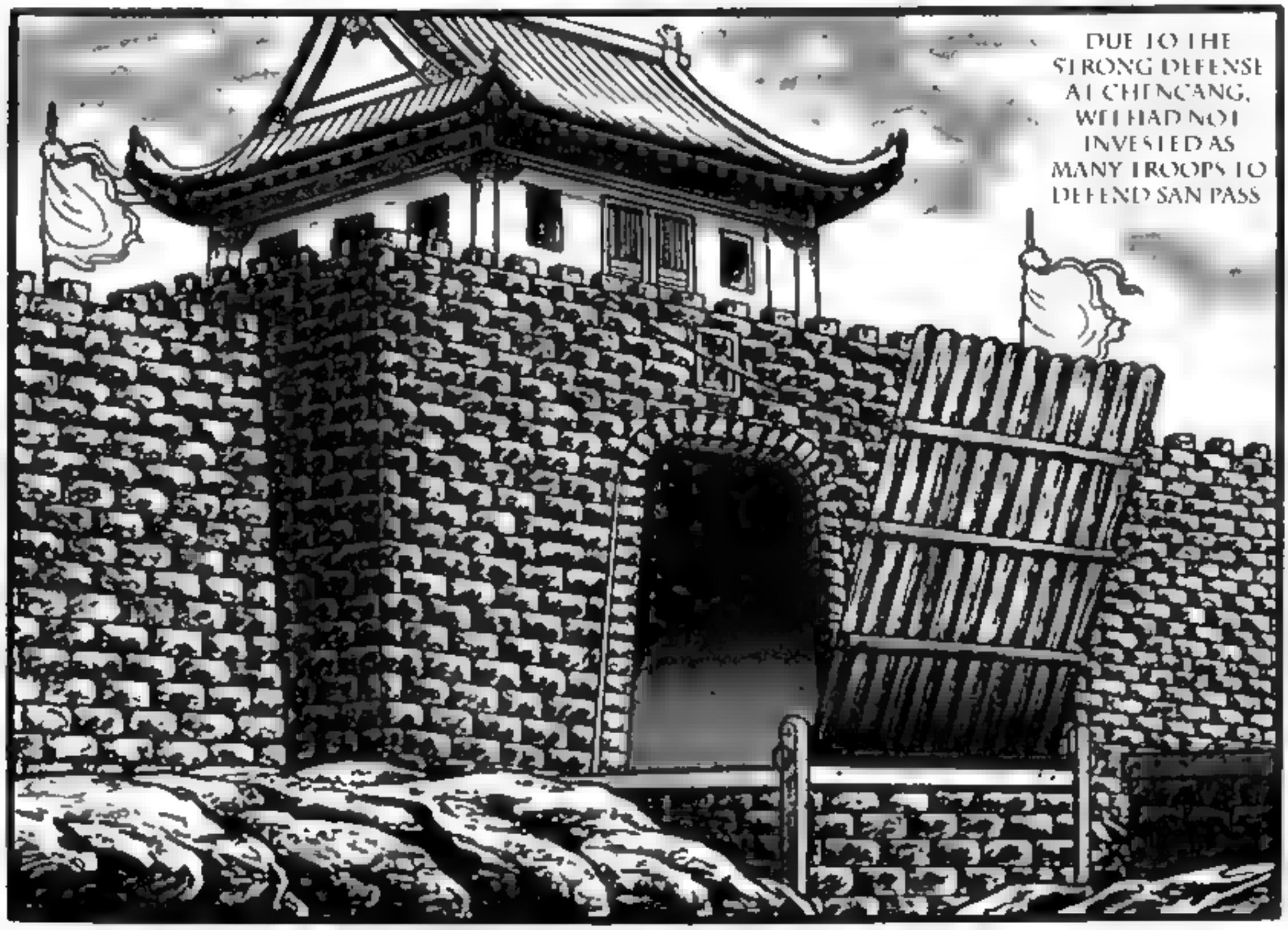
I ANNOUNCED THAT YOU TWO WILL BE SETTING OUT FOR CHENCANG IN 3 DAYS IN ORDER TO DECEIVE ENEMY SPIES.

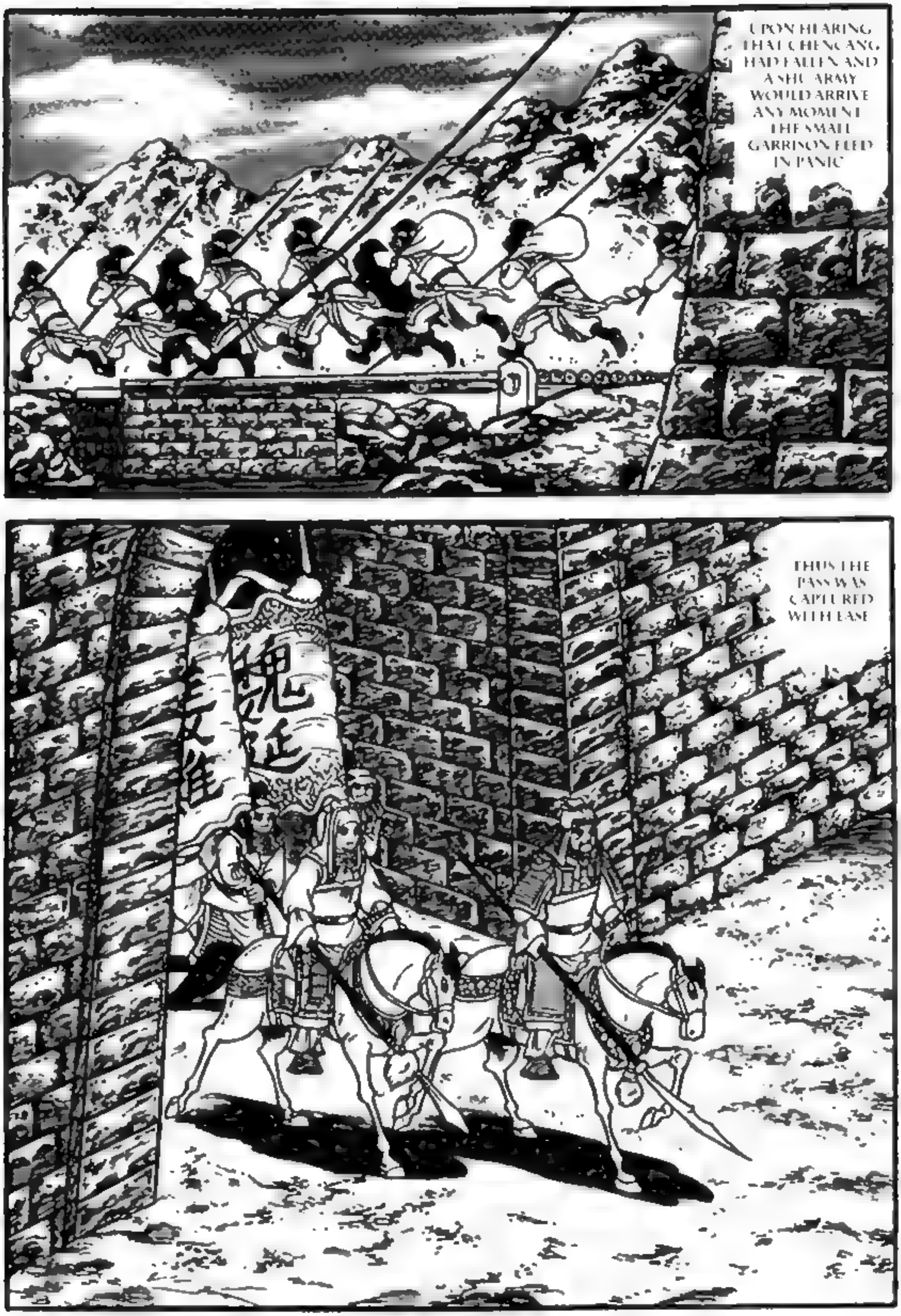
BUT SECRETLY, I ORDERED GUAN XING AND ZHANG BAO TO LEAD A SWIFT ASSAULT ON CHENCANG BEFORE YOU TWO ARRIVED. THEY WERE HELPED BY A SPY I HAD ALREADY PLACE INSIDE CHENCANG, WHO STARTED FIRES AND OPENED THE GATES.

I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH CUNNING TACTICS EXPLOITING THE ENEMY'S INTELLI-GENCE GATHERING ABILITIES...

YES, SIR. WE WILL TAKE THE PASS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
SINCE CHENCANG IS TAKEN, I WANT YOU TWO TO TAKE SAN PASS JUST UP AHEAD FROM HERE. WHEN THE ENEMIES HEAR CHENCHANG HAS FALLEN, THEY WILL TRY TO REINFORCE THE PASS AND TURN IT INTO ANOTHER CHOKEPOINT LIKE CHENCANG SO SPEED IS ESSENTIAL.

WEI YAN AND
JIANG WEI
QUICKLY LED
A FORCE TO
ASSAULT
SAN PASS
魏延


DUE TO THE
STRONG DEFENSE
AT CHENCANG,
WEI HAD NOT
INVESTED AS
MANY TROOPS TO
DEFEND SAN PASS


UPON HEARING THAT CHENG ANG HAD FALLEN AND ANHUI ARMY WOULD ARRIVE ANY MOMENT THE SMALL GARRISON FLED IN PANIC
THUS THE PASS WAS CAPTURED WITH EASE

魏延
AS SOON AS WE'VE ARRIVED!?
A WEI FORCE IS HEADED HERE AS WE SPEAK, SIR!
姜維
AHH!

魏

張郃

張

IT'S JUST AS THE GENERAL OF THE RIGHT SAID. IF WE ARRIVED A MOMENT LATER, THEN THE ENEMIES WOULD HAVE TURNED THIS PASS INTO ANOTHER CHENCANG!

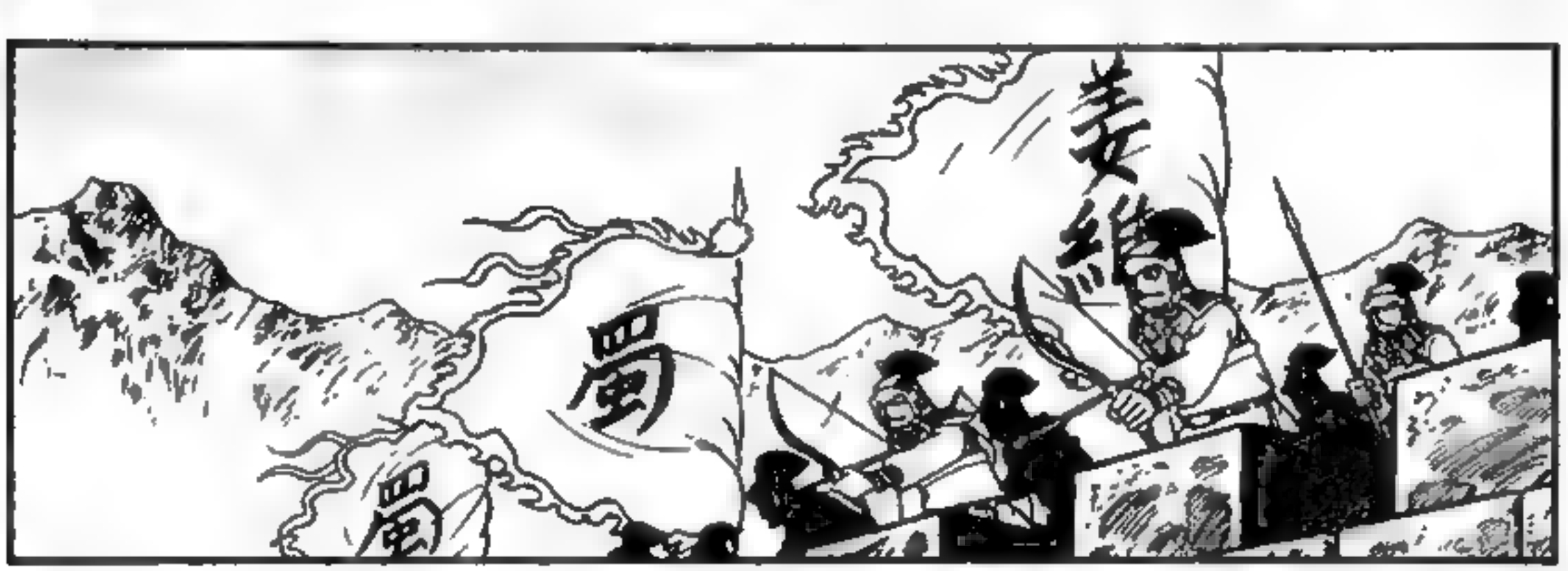
THAT'S ZHANG HE'S FLAG!

YES, SIR!

MAN THE WALLS AND PREPARE TO DEFEND THE PASS!

HM?

魏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張郃
WHAT!? THAT MUST MEAN BOTH CHENCANG AND SAN PASS HAVE ALREADY FALLEN TO THE ENEMIES!

SIR! THERE ARE SHU FLAGS UP ON THE WALLS!

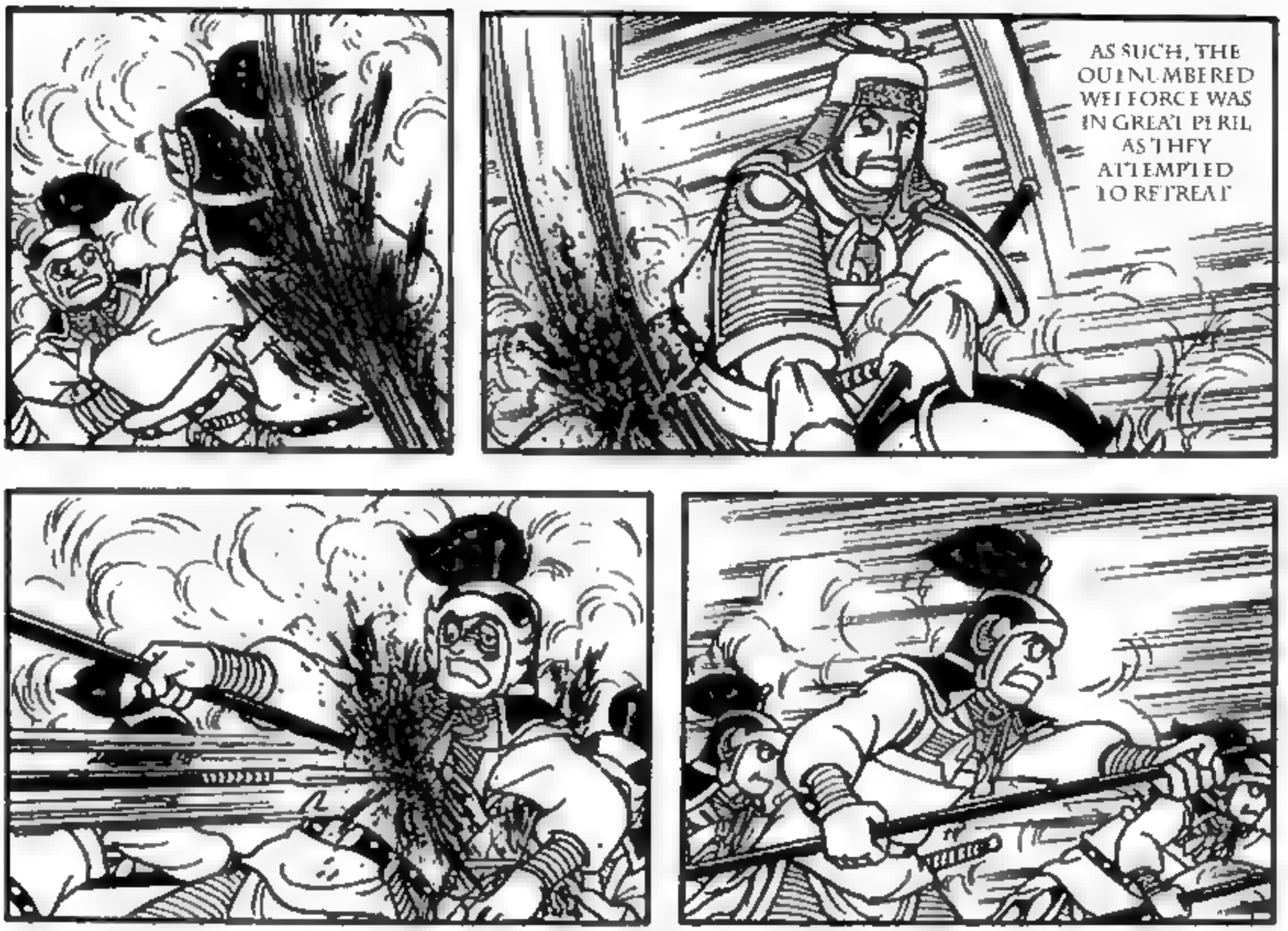
RETREAT!

WE CAN'T HOPE TO TAKE THIS PASS WITH ONLY 3000 TROOPS...

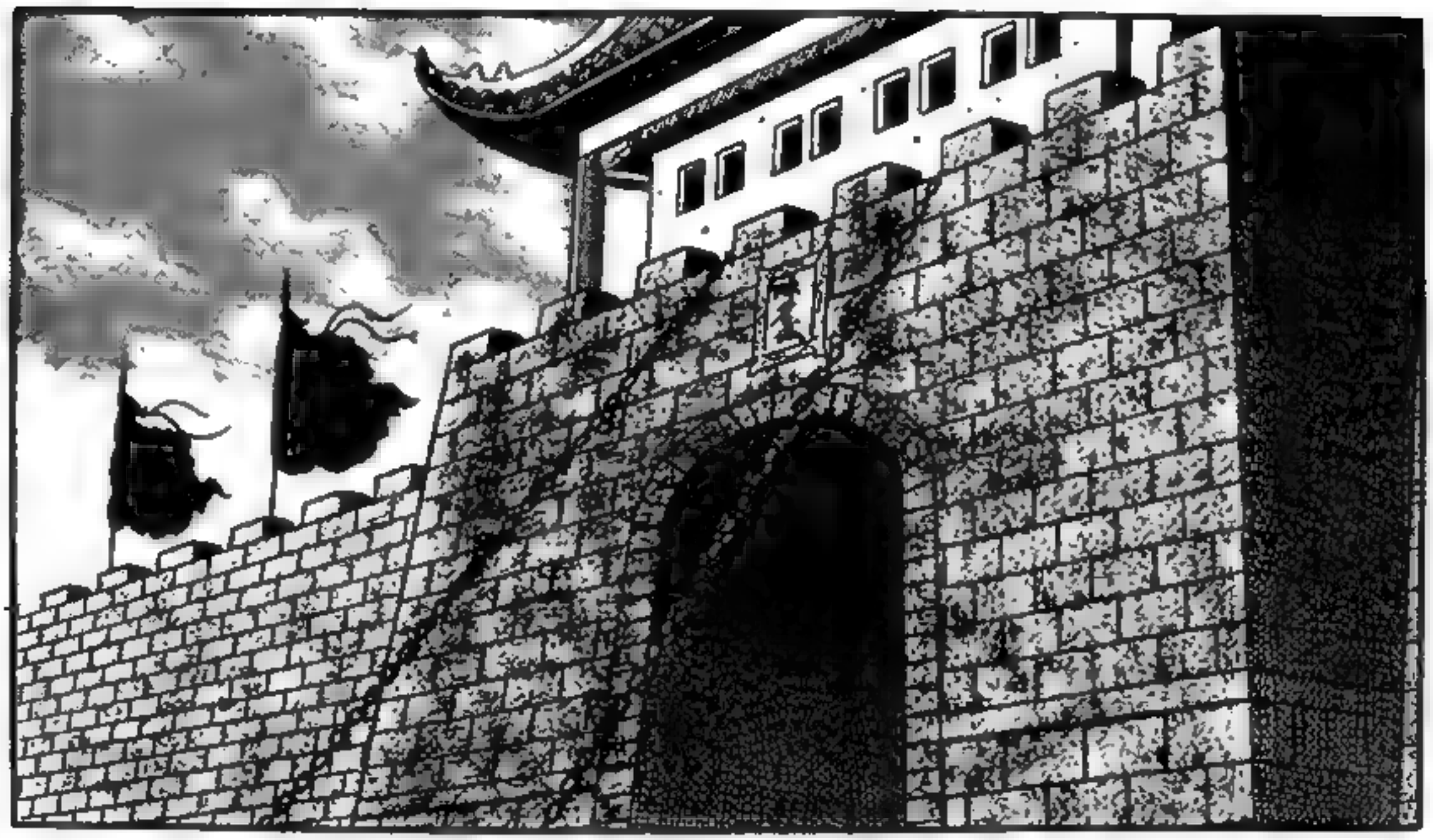
OPEN THE GATES! WE'LL PURSUE THEIR TINY FORCE!

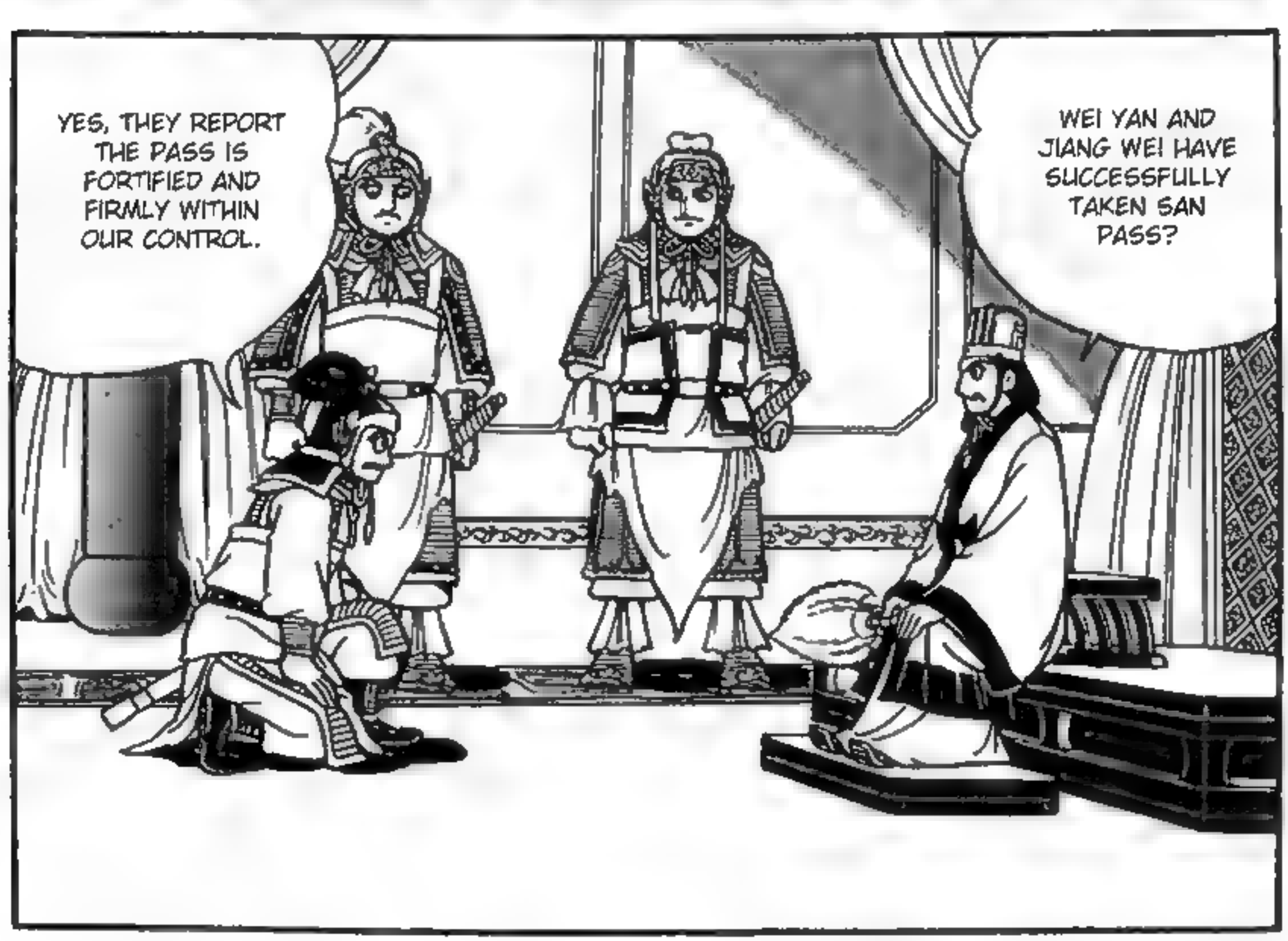
HAHA! LOOK AT THEM WITHDRAW IN PANIC!

IN WAR THERE IS NOTHING MORE DANGEROUS THAN BEING ATTACKED WHILE RETREATING MAKING AN ORDERLY RETREAT IN THE FACE OF ENEMIES THE MOST DIFFICULT MANOEUVRE.


AS SUCH, THE OUTNUMBERED WEI FORCE WAS IN GREAT PERIL AS THEY ATTEMPTED TO RETREAT
ZHANG HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT HIGH CASUALTIES AS HE LED THE RETREAT BACK TO CHANG AN

SEAL OF COMMAND




YES, THEY REPORT THE PASS IS FORTIFIED AND FIRMLY WITHIN OUR CONTROL.
WEI YAN AND JIANG WEI HAVE SUCCESSFULLY TAKEN SAN PASS?

YES, SIR.

SPLENDID. TELL THEM THEY'VE DONE WELL.

THE TIME IS RIPE. WE WILL HEAD THROUGH YE GORGE WITH ALL OUR FORCES TO CAPTURE JIANWEI, THEN HEAD TO QISHAN HILLS.

THE SHU TROOPS IMMEDIATELY PASSED THROUGH THE YE GORGE
AND CAPTURED JIANWEI COUNTY
王
張飛
門
IT WAS NOW THE THIRD TIME THAT KONGMING LED THE ARMY TO QISHAN HILLS

QISHAN
HILLS

GENTLEMEN, TWICE I'VE LED YOU HERE TO QISHAN HILLS, AND TWICE HAS SUCCESS ELUDED US. BUT HERE WE ARE AGAIN...
OUR ENEMIES WILL LIKELY TAKE UP THE SAME DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AS THE LAST TWO TIMES.

THUS, WE WILL DO THE UNEXPECTED BY ATTACKING YINPING AND WUDU FIRST.

MY GUESS IS THAT THEY WILL THINK THAT I WILL FIRST ATTACK YONGCHENG AND MEICHENG, AND THUS SEND ARMIES THERE TO SECURE THEM.

ALLOW ME, SIR.

BY CONTROLLING THOSE TWO PLACES, WE WILL DRIVE A WEDGE INTO THE WEI FORCES AND KEEP THE R TROOPS DISPERSED. NOW WHO WILL TAKE YINPING AND WUDU FOR ME?

I, TOO, WILL HELP TAKE THEM.

THANK YOU, SIR.

YES, SIR.

THEN I GRANT EACH OF YOU 10,000 TROOPS TO TAKE THEM.

YES, I ASSUME ZHUGE LIANG IS ALREADY HEADING FOR QISHAN HILLS.

WHAT!? NOT ONLY HAS HAO ZHAO DIED, BUT BOTH CHENCANG AND SAN PASS ARE ALREADY IN SHU HANDS!?

MOST LIKELY...

THEN YONGCHENG AND MEICHENG ARE IN DANGER!

YES, BUT WE CAN'T POSSIBLY HOLD OUT AGAINST SHU'S MASSIVE FORCES WITH JUST THE TROOPS IN THE WESTERN FRONT.

WE MUST NOT DELAY! ZHANG HE, I NEED YOU TO STAY HERE AND GUARD CHANG'AN. I WILL HEAD TO MEICHENG'S DEFENSE WHILE SUN LI WILL GO TO YONGCHENG'S DEFENSE.

RIGHT.

YES, THAT'S WHY YOU MUST SEND AN URGENT REQUEST FOR REINFORCE-MENTS TO THE IMPERIAL COURT AT LUOYANG!

THE MESSENGER RODE NIGHT AND DAY FROM CHANG'AN TO REACH LUOYANG AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

BUT THE LUOYANG HE ARRIVED AT WAS ALREADY AT UNEASE.

THE REASON FOR THIS WAS LU XUN GATHERING AND DRILLING A HUGE WU ARMY AT WUCHANG. IT SEEMED CLEAR TO ALL THAT A WU ATTACK WAS IMMINENT.

ZHUGE LIANG HAS ONCE AGAIN FOUND HIS WAY TO QISHAN HILLS AND WU'S HUGE ARMY IS JUST EYEING OUR BORDERS FOR A CHANCE TO ATTACK. THE FATE OF WEI HANGS IN A BALANCE. HOW CAN I OVERCOME THIS?

A COMBINED WU-SHU INVASION WILL BE THE DEATH OF WEI!

NEITHER ARE FOES WE CAN WIN BY DIVERTING ONLY HALF OUR STRENGTH TO!

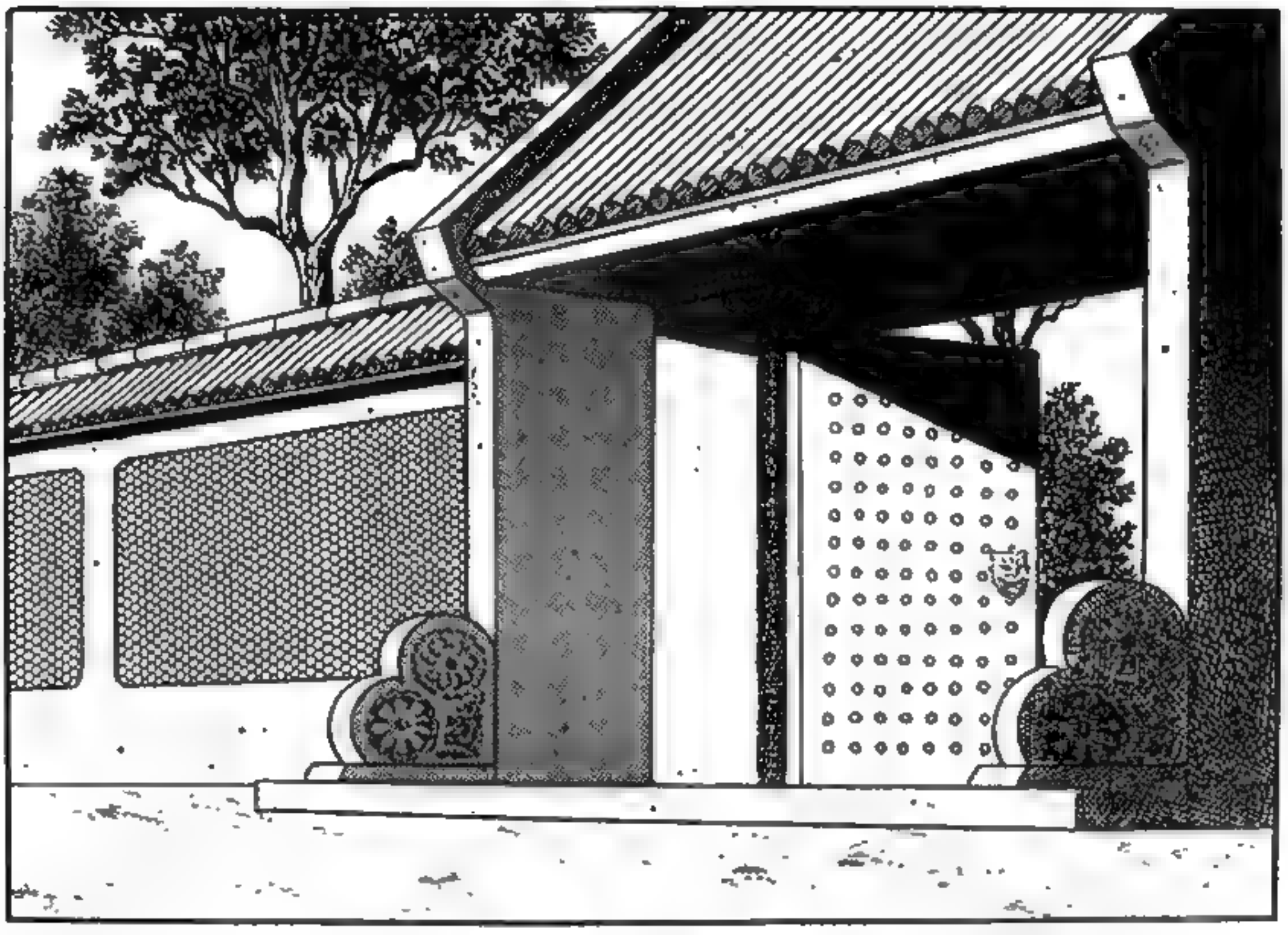
.....

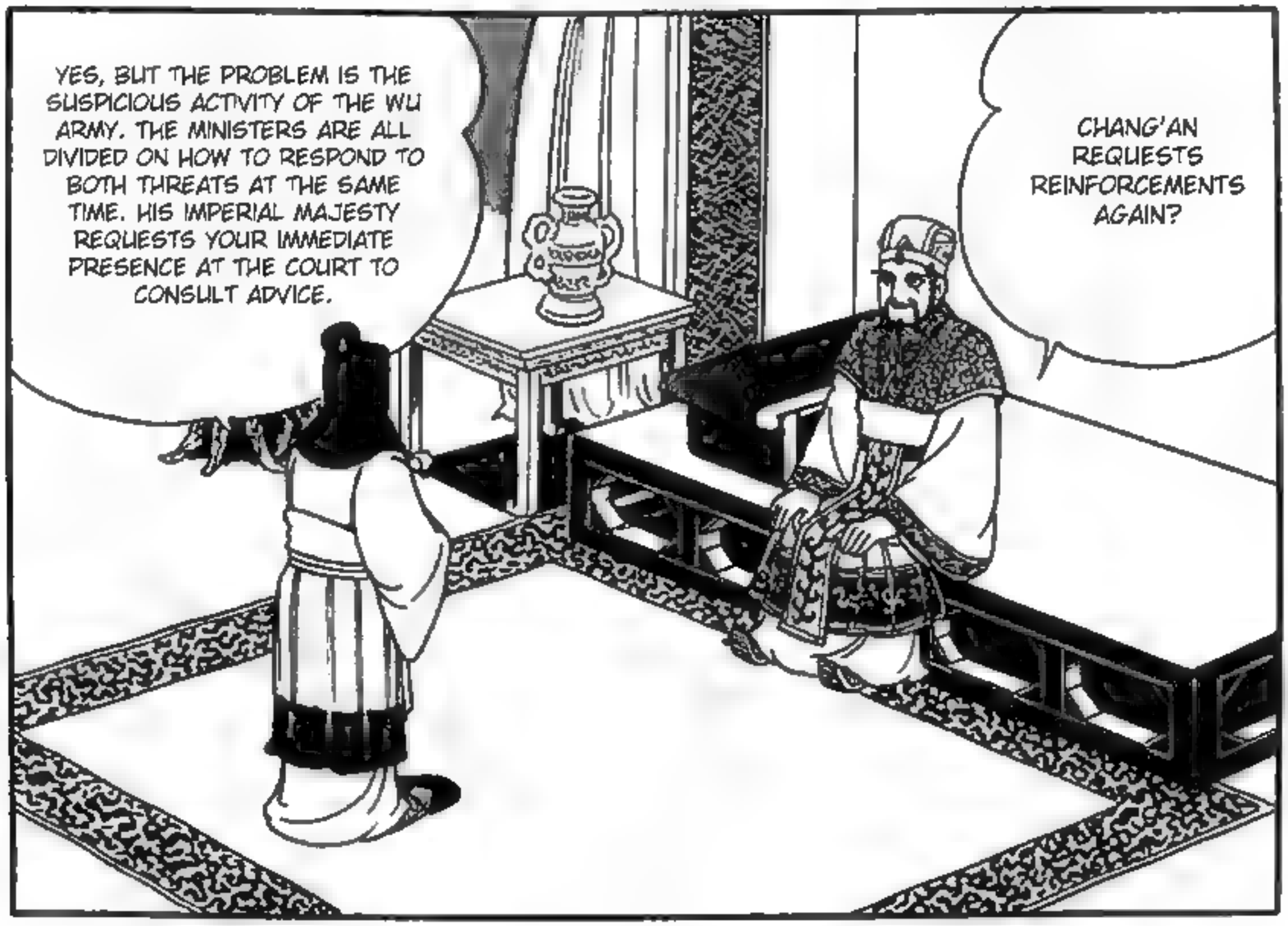
YES, I KNOW ALREADY! THAT'S WHY I'M ASKING IF ANY OF YOU HAVE GOOD ADVICE TO OFFER!

.....

YES, SUMMON HIM AT ONCE!

PERHAPS YOUR MAJESTY SHOULD CONSULT SIMA YI AGAIN.




YES, BUT THE PROBLEM IS THE SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY OF THE WU ARMY. THE MINISTERS ARE ALL DIVIDED ON HOW TO RESPOND TO BOTH THREATS AT THE SAME TIME. HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY REQUESTS YOUR IMMEDIATE PRESENCE AT THE COURT TO CONSULT ADVICE.
CHANG'AN REQUESTS REINFORCEMENTS AGAIN?

THANK YOU, SIR. THE ENTIRE COURT IS IN DIRE NEED FOR YOUR WISDOM.

YES, OF COURSE. I WILL GO RIGHT AWAY.

SIMA YI, THE EMPIRE IS IN CRISIS! ZHUGE LIANG IS AT QISHAN HILLS ONCE AGAIN WHILE A WU INVASION LOOKS IMMINENT. HOW MUST I RESPOND TO BOTH THREATS AT THE SAME TIME?

NO NEED? ARE YOU SAYING TWO SIMULTANEOUS THREATS ARE NOT A CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

THERE IS NO NEED TO WAVER INDECISIVELY, YOUR MAJESTY.

AS YOU RECALL, SUN QUAN HAS RECENTLY NAMED HIMSELF EMPEROR, AND SHU GAVE FORMAL RECOGNITION. THE WU ARMY GATHERING AT WUCHANG IS MOST LIKELY SOMETHING SHU REQUESTED IN EXCHANGE FOR RECOGNIZING SUN QUAN'S NEW TITLE.

SINCE WU STILL WISHES TO ALLY ITSELF WITH SHU, IT COULD HARDLY AFFORD TO IGNORE THE REQUEST. THAT BEING SAID, WU IS NOT SO COMMITTED TO THE ALLIANCE THAT IT WOULD FIRST HEAD A COSTLY-ATTACK ON WEI.

THEN WU'S ACTIONS ARE A MERE FEINT?

UNLIKE SHU, WU IS UNWILLING TO MAKE LARGE SACRIFICES IN A WAR AGAINST US. THUS, WU IS TRYING TO MAINTAIN ITS ALLIANCE BY ONLY MAKING A PRETENSE TO LAUNCH A SERIOUS INVASION. THEY WILL MERELY CONTINUE TO EYE US ACROSS THE BORDERS AND DO NOTHING MORE UNLESS WE ARE SERIOUSLY WEAKENED AND THEY SENSE AN EASY CONQUEST.

THUS, WE SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO DEVOTE OUR WHOLE STRENGTH TO REPEL SHU FIRST AND DEAL WITH WU LATER.

YES, WU'S ACTIONS ARE A FEINT, WHILE SHU'S ACTIONS ARE THE REAL THING.

I AM ASHAMED THAT I WAVERED SO INDECISIVELY.

WHEN YOU EXPLAIN IT LIKE THAT, IT ALL MAKES PERFECT SENSE.

SIMA YI, THERE IS NO OTHER MAN IN OUR EMPIRE WHO CAN MATCH ZHUGE LIANG. I APPOINT YOU COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND GIVE YOU THE SEAL OF COMMAND, ALLOWING YOU TO DIRECT ALL OUR TROOPS. PLEASE DRIVE OFF THE SHU INVASION AGAIN.

PLEASE HOLD ON A MOMENT, YOUR MAJESTY! THE SEAL OF COMMAND HAS ALREADY BEEN GIVEN TO COMMANDER CAO ZHEN, WHO IS OF THE IMPERIAL CAO FAMILY. HOW COULD I POSSIBLY ACCEPT?

AS I AM A MERE SERVANT, IT WOULD BE IMPROPER FOR ME TO ACCEPT. THE SEAL OF COMMAND SHOULD BE PASSED ONTO ANOTHER MEMBER OF YOUR MAJESTY'S FAMILY.

YES, BUT CAO ZHEN IS CURRENTLY SICK AND NOT FIT TO LEAD AN ARMY. YOU ARE THE ONLY MAN WHO CAN GUIDE WEI THROUGH THIS CRISIS.

.....

BUT WHO ELSE IS QUALIFIED?

YES, BUT...

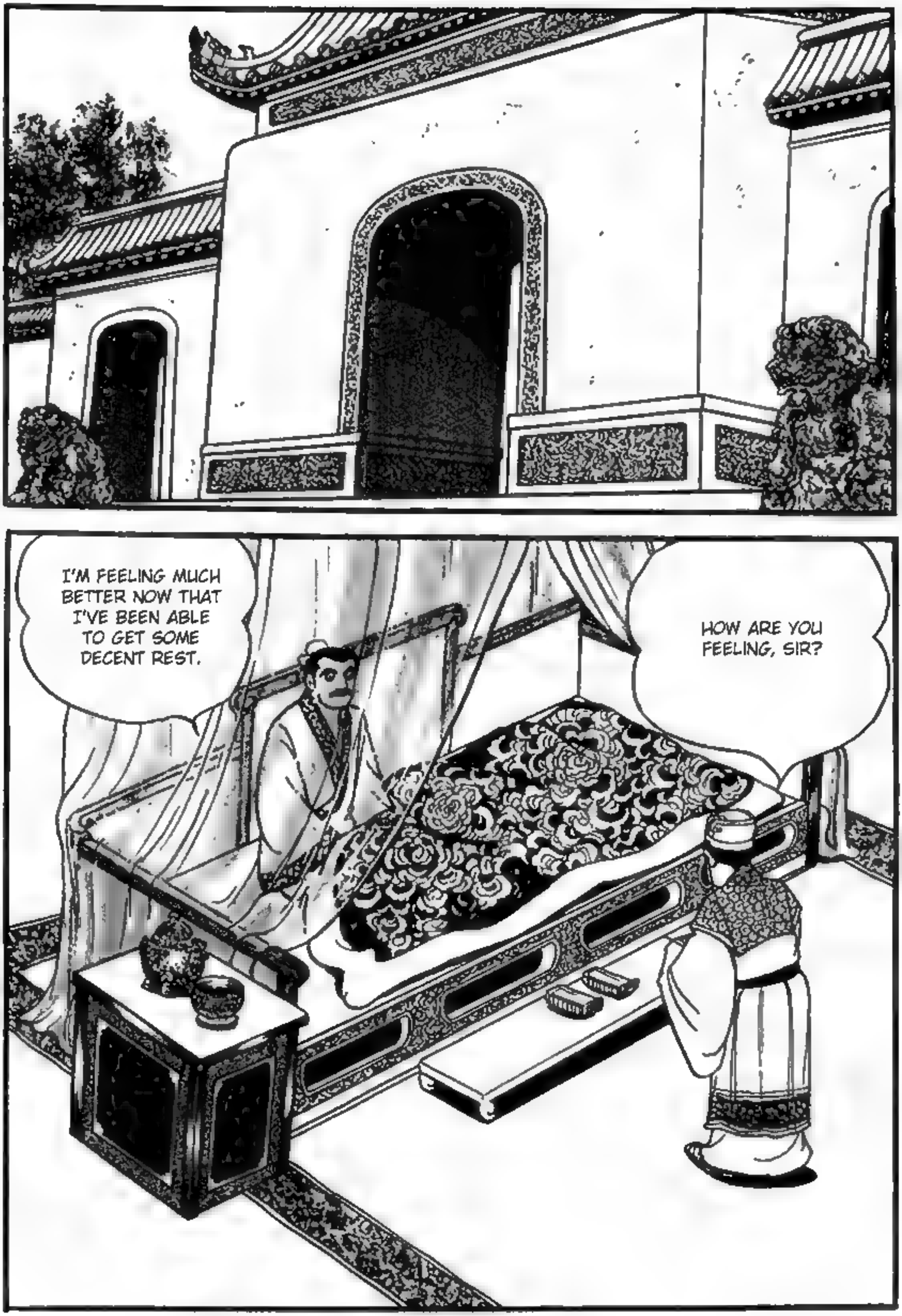
IF THE SHU INVASION IS NOT REPELLED, EVEN WU WILL TRY THEIR LUCK AT TAKING LUOYANG!

N-NO, PLEASE WAIT, YOUR MAJESTY!

I WILL WRITE AN IMPERIAL DECREE TO TURN OVER THE SEAL OF COMMAND FROM CAO ZHEN TO YOU.

IF YOU INSIST ON HANDING THE SEAL TO ME, THEN I WILL GO ASK CAO ZHEN MYSELF TO GET IT.

WRESTING THE SEAL OF COMMAND FROM CAO ZHEN IN THAT FASHION WILL ONLY HUMILIATE HIM.


I'M FEELING MUCH BETTER NOW THAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET SOME DECENT REST.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING, SIR?

NO, SIR.

BUT I ASSUME YOU'RE NOT HERE SIMPLY TO CHECK UP ON MY HEALTH.

WHAT!? ARE THEY PLANNING TO ATTACK AGAIN!?
THE TRUTH IS THAT WU IS GATHERING AN ENORMOUS ARMY AT WUCHANG UNDER LU XUN'S COMMAND.

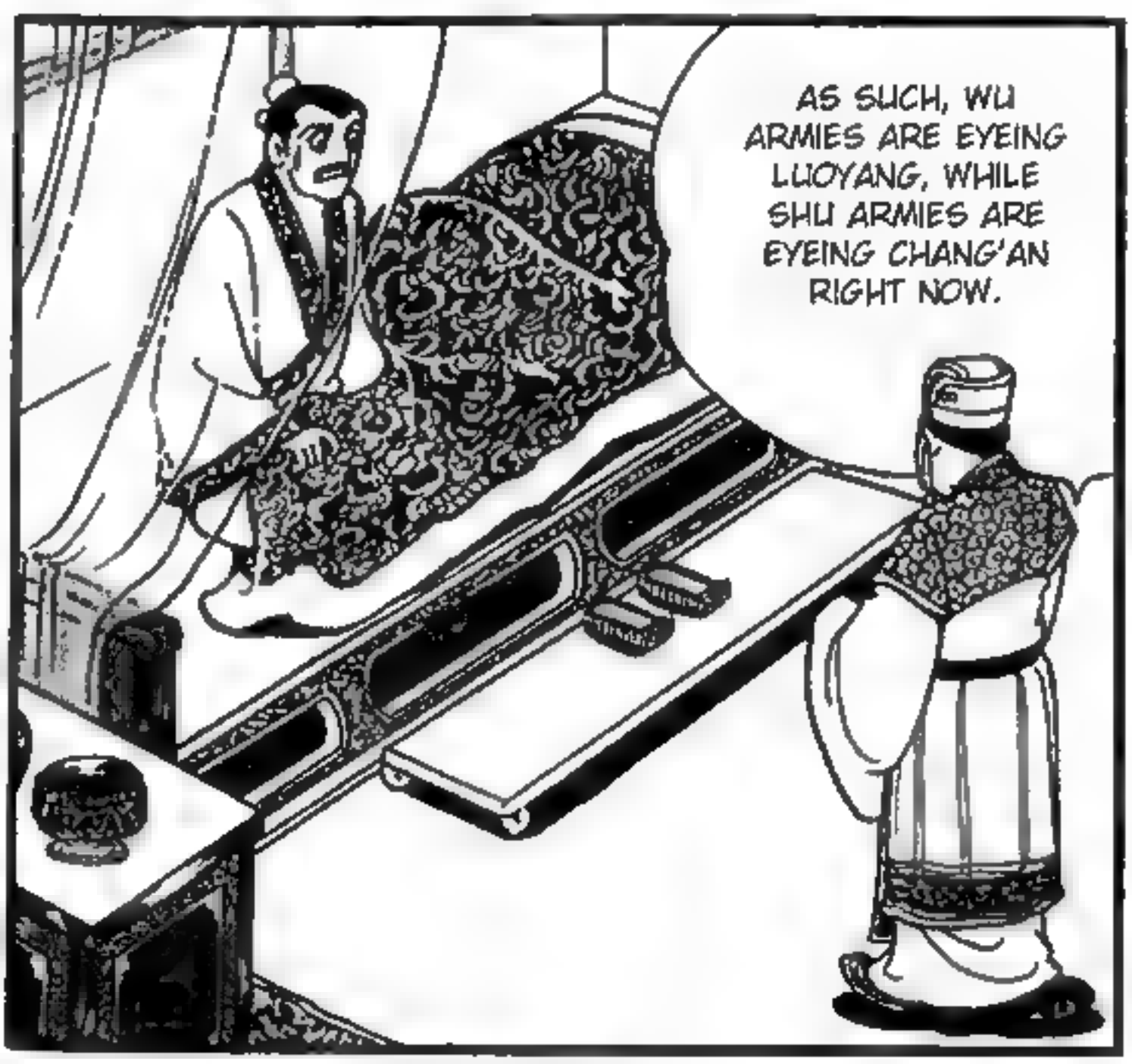
MORE BAD NEWS!?

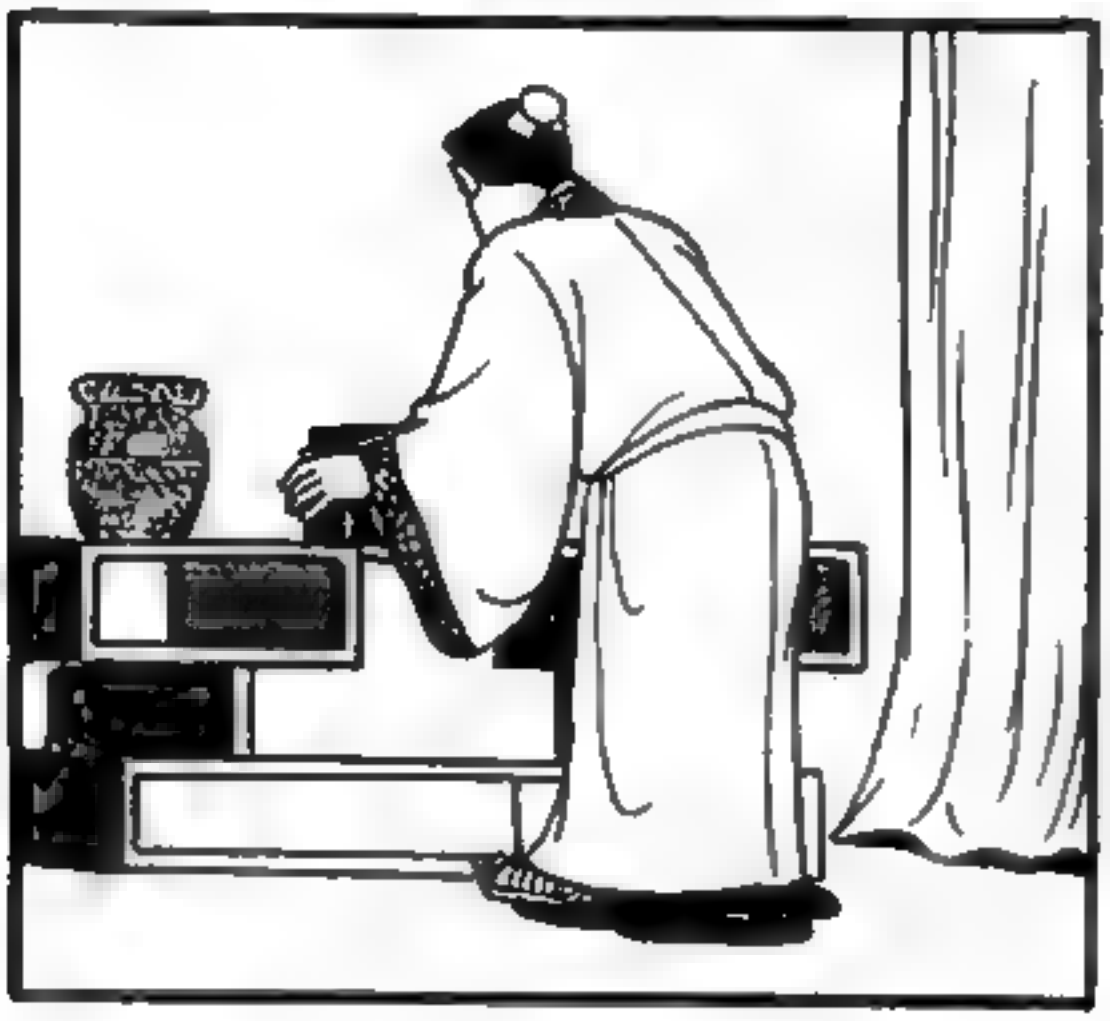
NOT ONLY THAT...

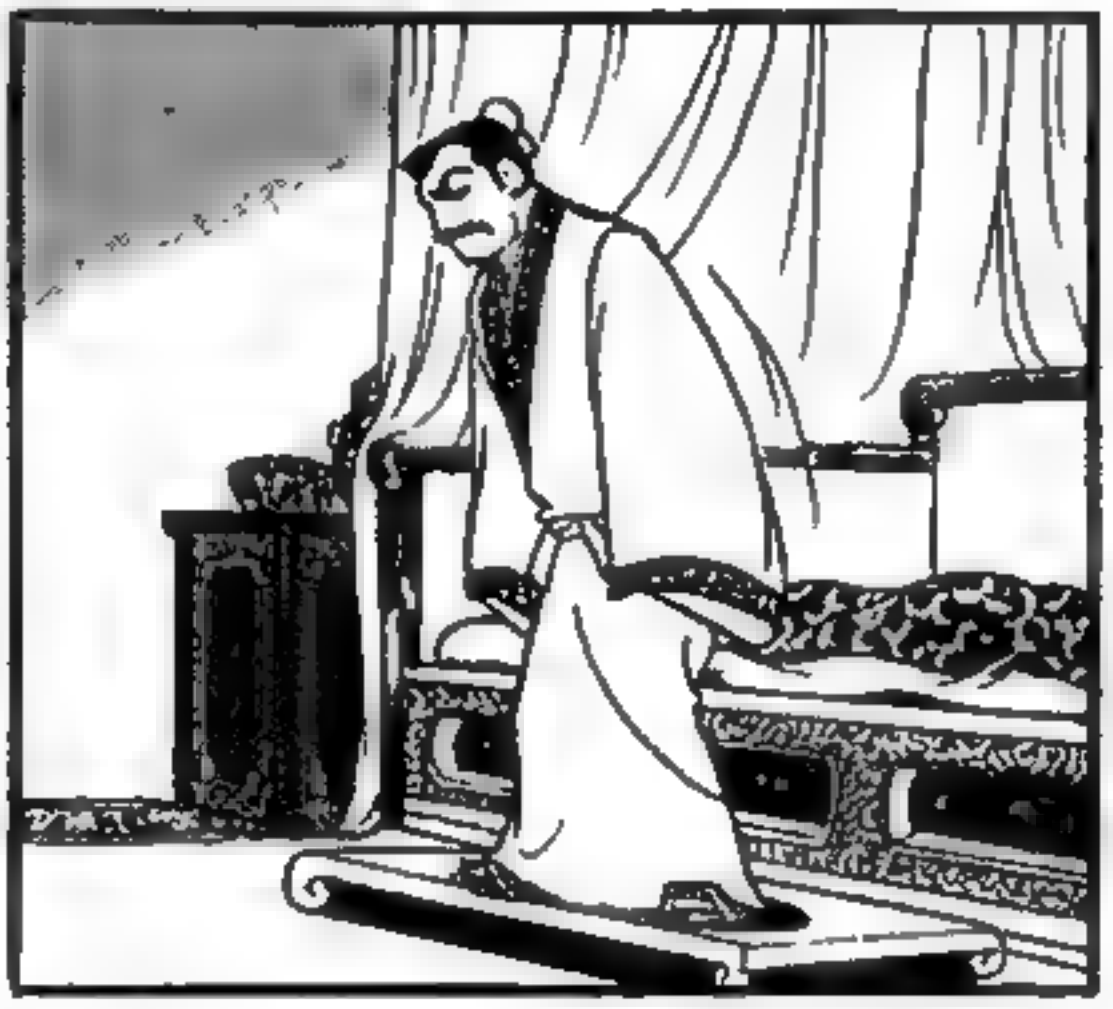
WHAT!? HE'S AT QISHAN AGAIN!?

ZHUGE LIANG HAS TAKEN CHENCANG AND HEADED TO QISHAN HILLS AGAIN.

I HAD NO IDEA OUR EMPIRE WAS IN SUCH DIRE STRAITS. MY SERVANTS MUST HAVE KEPT THIS AWAY FROM ME OUT OF THEIR CONCERN FOR MY HEALTH.


AS SUCH, WU ARMIES ARE EYEING LUOYANG, WHILE SHU ARMIES ARE EYEING CHANG'AN RIGHT NOW.





I WANT YOU TAKE THE SEAL OF COMMAND.

YES?

SIMA YI.

NO, THIS IS FOR THE BEST.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, SIR!?

HM!?

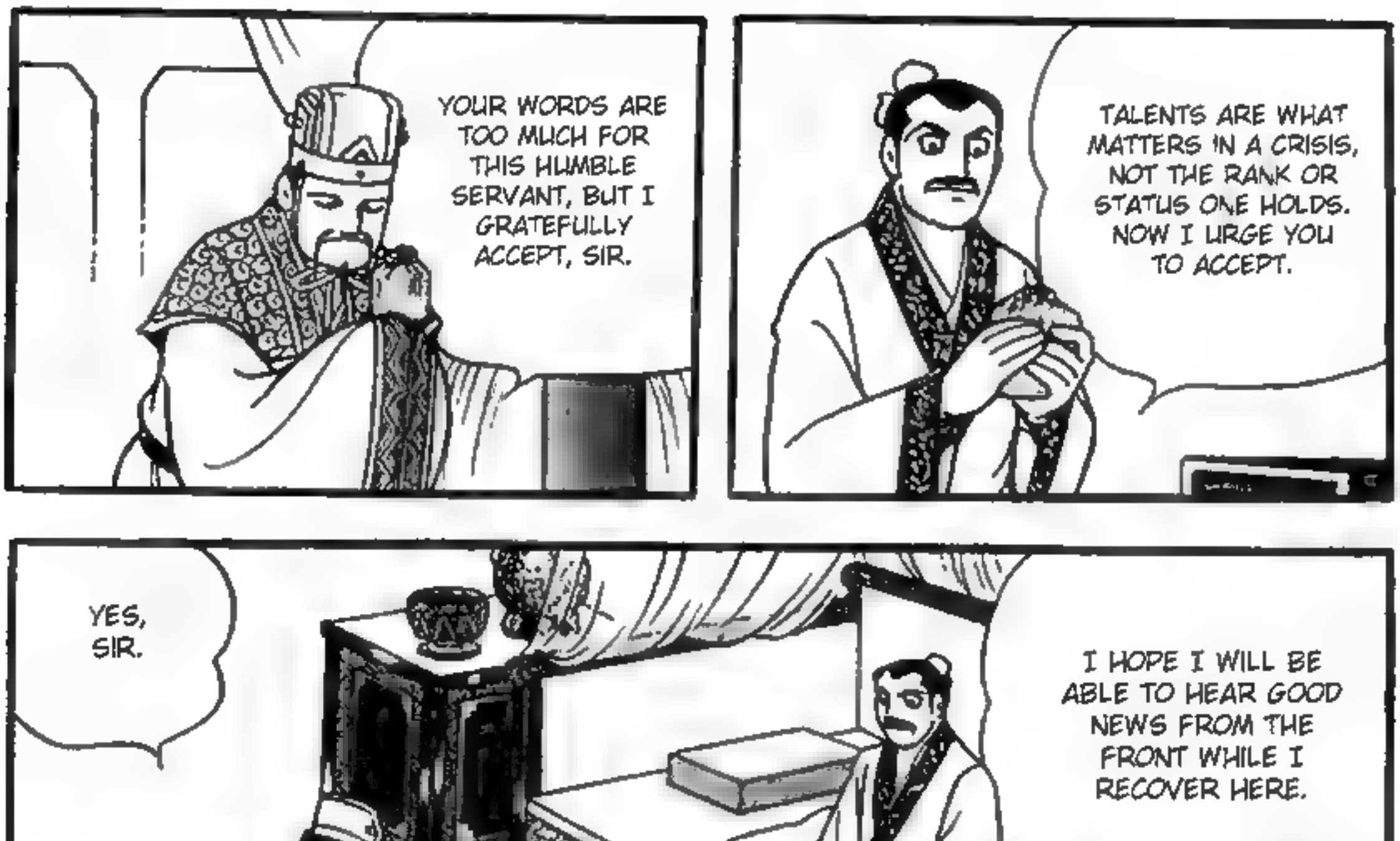
I'VE FOUGHT ZHUGE LIANG SEVERAL TIMES, AND NOT ONCE HAVE I MANAGED TO BEST HIM. HE IS NOT A FOE I CAN HANDLE.

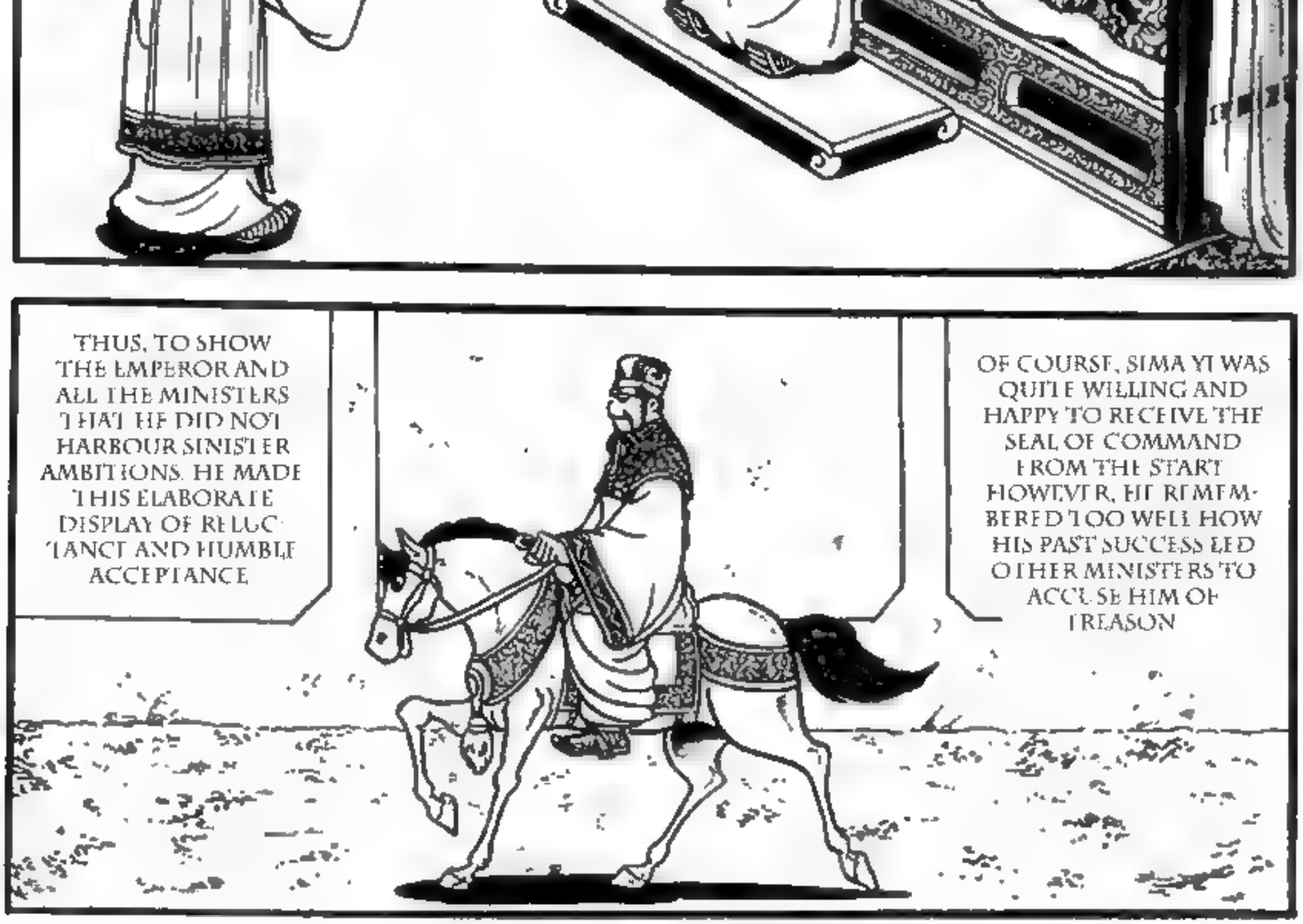
AS A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, HOW CAN I NOT PRIORITIZE THE EMPIRE'S SECURITY OVER MY HONOUR OR PRIDE? YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DEAL WITH ZHUGE LIANG.

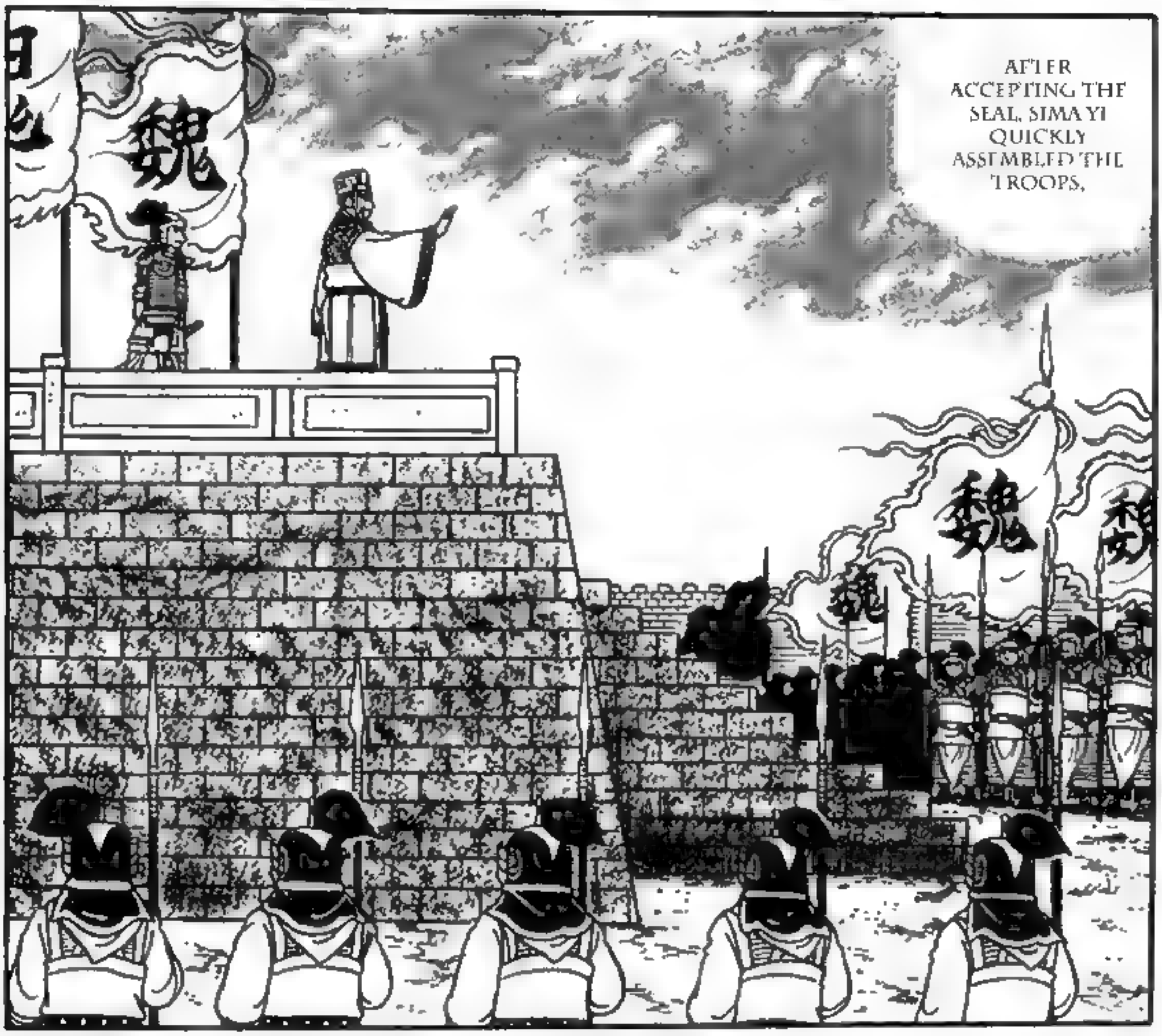
AND IF I WERE TO ONCE AGAIN LEAD THE TROOPS WHILE SICK, WEI WILL MEET ITS END THIS TIME.

I FEAR THAT I AM OVERSTEPPING MY BOUNDS, SIR...

SO PLEASE ACCEPT THE SEAL OF COMMAND TO LEAD OUR ARMIES AND SAVE THE EMPIRE. I WILL TELL HIS MAJESTY THAT I'VE PASSED OFF THE SEAL.


YOUR WORDS ARE TOO MUCH FOR THIS HUMBLE SERVANT, BUT I GRATEFULLY ACCEPT, SIR.
TALENTS ARE WHAT MATTERS IN A CRISIS, NOT THE RANK OR STATUS ONE HOLDS. NOW I URGE YOU TO ACCEPT.
YES, SIR.
I HOPE I WILL BE ABLE TO HEAR GOOD NEWS FROM THE FRONT WHILE I RECOVER HERE.


THUS, TO SHOW THE EMPEROR AND ALL THE MINISTERS THAT HE DID NOT HARBOUR SINISTER AMBITIONS, HE MADE THIS ELABORATE DISPLAY OF RELUCTANCE AND HUMBLE ACCEPTANCE
OF COURSE, SIMA YI WAS QUITE WILLING AND HAPPY TO RECEIVE THE SEAL OF COMMAND FROM THE START HOWEVER, HE REMEMBERED TOO WELL HOW HIS PAST SUCCESS LED OTHER MINISTERS TO ACCUSE HIM OF TREASON


AFTER ACCEPTING THE SEAL, SIMA YI QUICKLY ASSEMBLED THE TROOPS,
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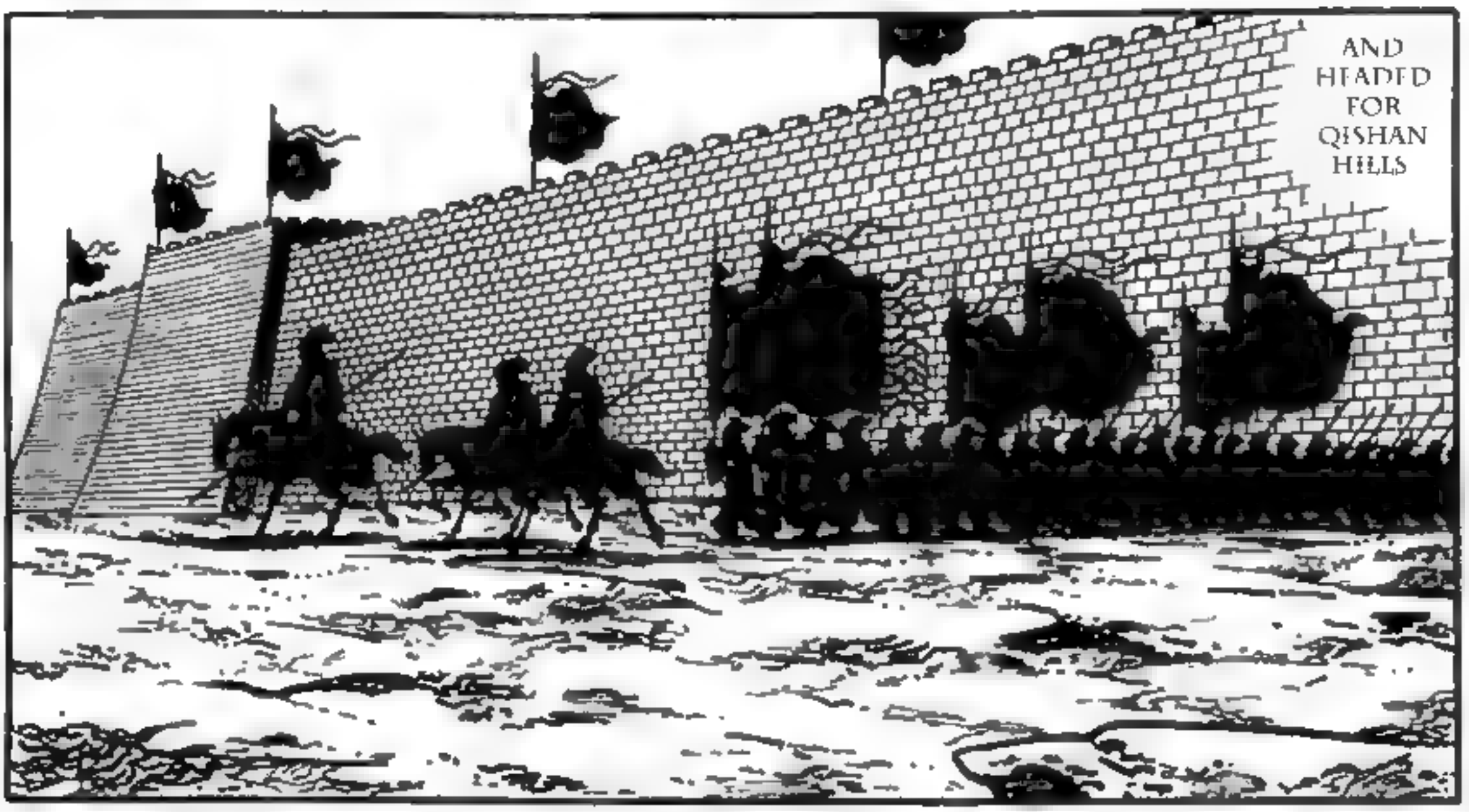
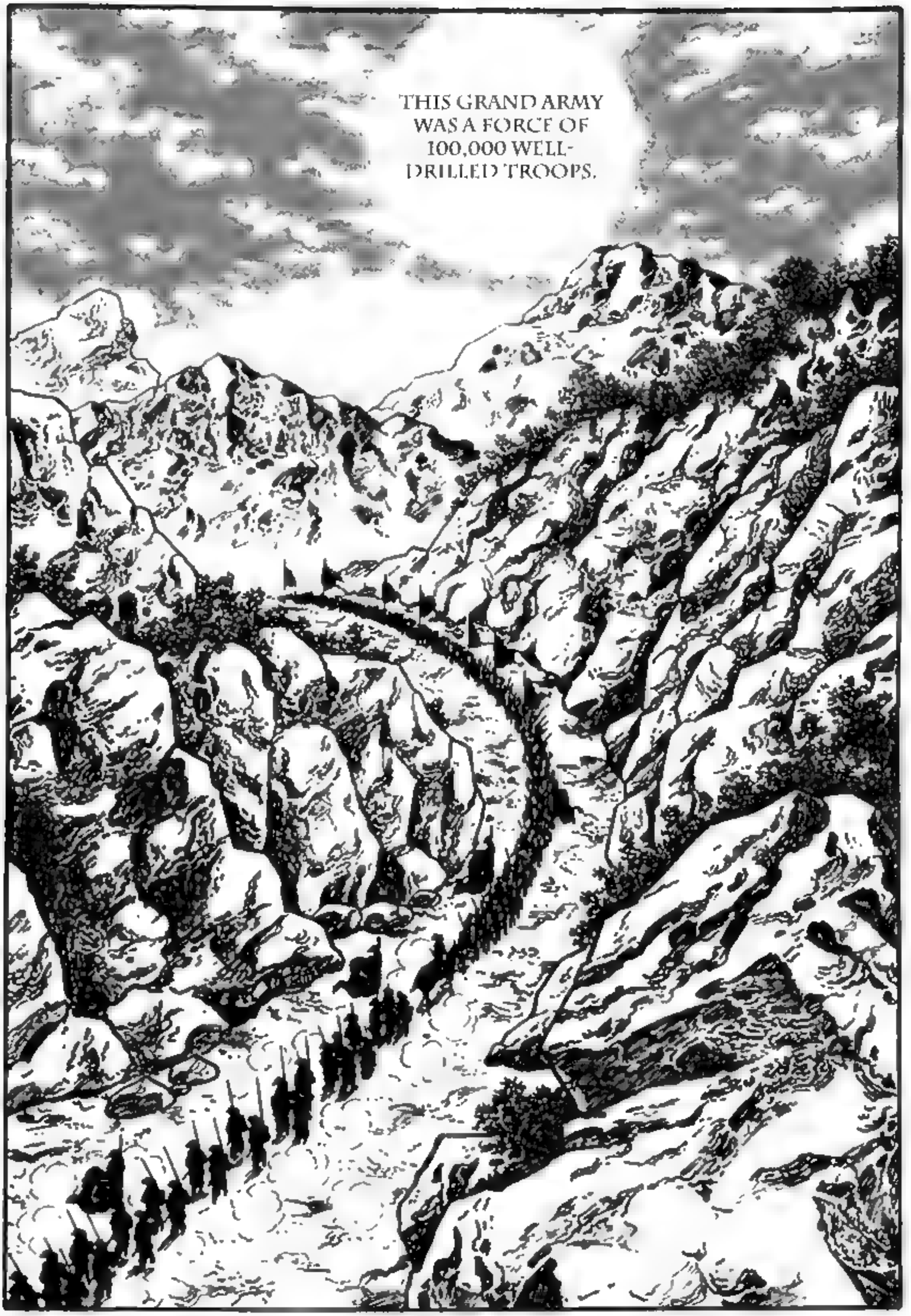

AND HEADED FOR QISHAN HILLS


THIS GRAND ARMY
WAS A FORCE OF
100,000 WELL-
DRILLED TROOPS.

司馬懿大都督
THIS WILL BE THE ACTUAL FIRST TIME WE MEET HIM IN BATTLE AND TEST OUR WITS AGAINST EACH OTHER. WHETHER HE WILL TRIUMPH, OR I WILL, I AM STILL UNSURE...

*BANNER READS "COMMANDER SIMA YI"

THUS MARKED
THE START OF
THE FIRST REAL
CONFRONTATION
BETWEEN
KONGMING
AND SIMA YI.

HAVE THEY CHALLENGED ANY OF YOUR MEN TO BATTLE YET?

YES, SIR.

HMM, SO THE ENEMIES HAVE MADE THREE SEPARATE CAMPS.

HMM, THAT'S STRANGE...

NO, AND NEITHER HAVE WE, FOR WE THOUGHT IT PROPER TO WAIT FOR YOUR ARRIVAL FIRST.

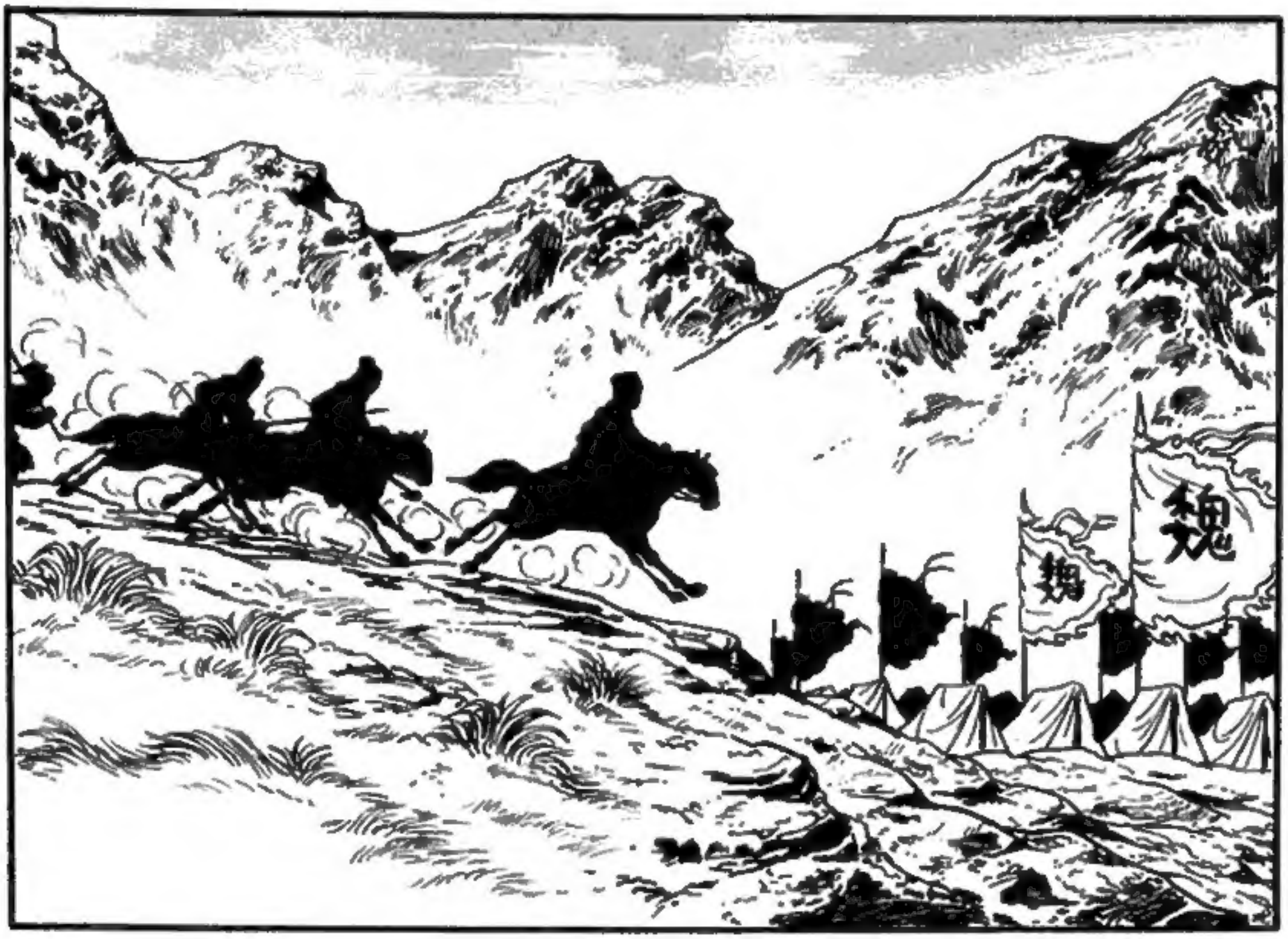
ZHUGE LIANG SHOULD CLEARLY HAVE HIS SIGHTS ON A RAPID CONQUEST.

WHY, SIR?

HE MUST BE PLANNING SOME-THING...

AND YET YOU SAY HE HASN'T MADE A MOVE SINCE MAKING CAMP HERE?

WE MUST FIRST FIND OUT WHY ZHUGE LIANG IS NOT TAKING ACTION.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ON THE FOURTH MONTH IN
THE 7TH YEAR OF BEGINNING
PROSPERITY (229 AD) AT THE
HILLS OF QISHAN, THE BATTLE
OF WITS BETWEEN ZHUGE LIANG
KONGMING AND SIMA YI
ZHONGDA COMMENCED.

TRANSLATED BY HOX

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横山 光輝

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